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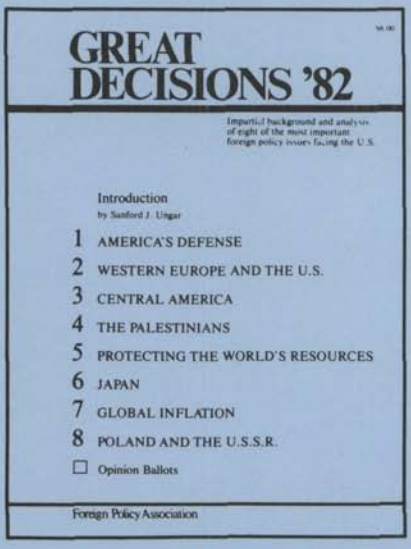
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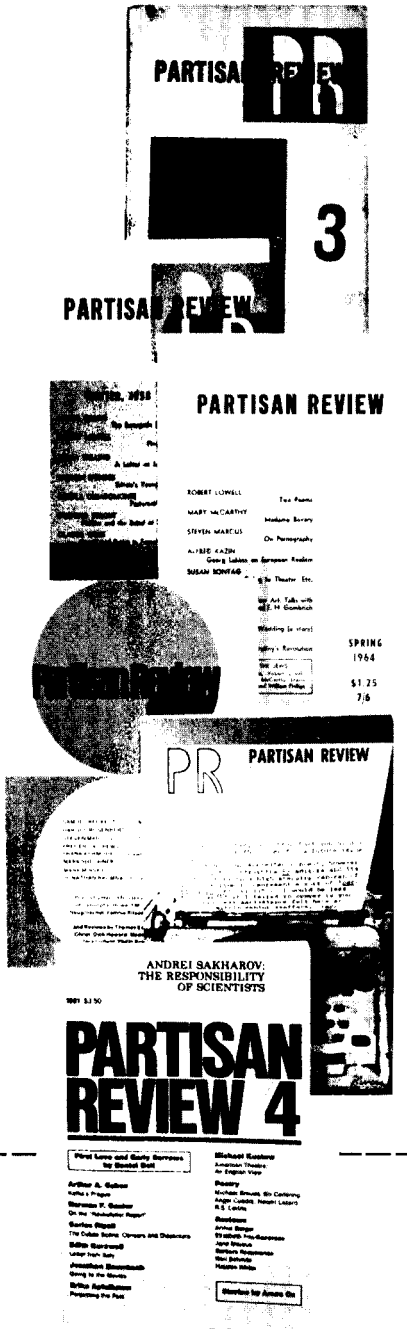

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COMMENT

NEO-HISTORY. Two recent events that had nothing else in common raised some questions about historical accuracy, particularly in the form of recollection. It almost seems as though we have a new genre: neo-history, which is the product of revision by recollection.

I

The new revisionism made a splash in the appearance of a traveling circus, an intellectual one, that showed up in the *Nation,* the *Soho News*, and was picked up by *La Republica* in Rome. The *Nation* has been promoting a revival of New Left thinking, while the *Soho News*, which is not known for its contributions either to culture or to politics, has been trying to stir up interest with juicy news and opinions.

The subject consisted of some remarks by Susan Sontag at a protest meeting against martial law in Poland, indicating that like some other intellectuals she herself had not been sufficiently firm or consistent in her stance against communism. She equated it with fascism in its repressive and barbaric nature. "Communism," she said, "was fascism with a human face." Both the *Nation* and the *Soho News* rushed to get comments on Sontag's statement by a strange assortment of writers. Among the commentators, Diana Trilling, Mary McCarthy, Nathan Glazer, and Seymour Martin Lipset were figures of some distinction and political experience. As for most of the others, one had to ask what their credentials were to judge Sontag's views except the ability to bring confusion to a hyperbolic statement. Many of them conceded that communism was bad, but it was redeemed by the idealism of its origins and that of its more simple adherents. Besides, some of the commentators complained, wasn't America also bad, in that it supported reactionary regimes. In answer to Poland they trotted out El Salvador—an ancient tactic in replying to condemnations of Soviet oppression. On the other hand, the French commentators, Bernard-Henri Levy, Julia Kristeva, and Felix Guattari, who only yesterday discovered Gulag, had the nerve to lecture American intellectuals for their tardy anticommunism. Some of the others wrote lengthy disquisitions on the mistakes of American foreign policy. Edward Said added to contemporary history by comparing Solidarity with the PLO. The best statements were by

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Mary McCarthy, Diana Trilling, Glazer, and Lipset. Diana Trilling argued that wavering should have stopped long ago, though in these times when so many intellectuals keep changing their positions, I would be inclined not to keep score of their past mistakes.

Sontag's own statement had the force of authentic indignation and honesty. But she gave apologists for Soviet behavior a weapon by describing communism as "fascism with a human face." It might have served her purpose just as well simply to say that both fascism and communism were the totalitarian evils of our time. But sophisticated intellectuals know what she meant: that communism uses fascist means but dresses them up in the progressive rhetoric of Marxism and socialism. She is, after all, one of our more distinguished and original writers, and one might assume that she's just as aware of the pitfalls of oversimplification as we are.

Leon Wieseltier's comment in this issue of *Partisan Review* goes more fully into the sophistical arguments of Sontag's critics. But I cannot agree with what he says about Sontag. She was not propounding a new theory about the nature of fascism and communism. All she was doing was to dramatize the revulsion at events in Poland.

II

The Truants by William Barrett is a work about some of the people and events in the history of *Partisan Review* which deserves serious attention. The book is engagingly written, and is to be commended for its cool tone and its many shrewd observations. And I cannot complain about most of his references to me, which show considerable affection and respect, as I always had for him. Still, the entire portrait does not seem right.

There is something about the book, not simple to pin down, that is somehow distorting of the total picture, though it is quite accurate and perceptive in its specific observations. I have written at length about the literature and politics and the role of the leading figures of the time in my own yet unpublished memoir. But it may be of interest at this point to compare briefly my own experience with Barrett's report.

William Barrett was an associate editor of *Partisan Review* from 1945 through 1955. It was a time of many changes, some noisy, some quiet. McCarthy was scalping communists in public, Vietnam was building up, intellectual radicalism was on the wane, the media were

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invading the arts, mass and middle culture were on the rise. But Barrett only touches on most of the political and cultural forces of the period, which were very complex and contradictory. Instead, he concentrates on the lives of a few people, Trilling, Rahv, Schwartz, and myself, which he does quite cleverly, but much is left out. The major issues Barrett discusses are what he calls the two Ms, Marxism and modernism, and these he treats in terms of an ideology, neo-conservatism, which Barrett now espouses, and through which he now sees the past. This bias leads, in my opinion, to a certain amount of distortion.

It would seem from Barrett's memoir—even more from Hilton Kramer's review of it in the *New York Times*—that we were all up to our necks in Marxism and modernism, and that we are now in a more enlightened phase because these twin fallacies have been abandoned. But the fact is that none of us was any longer a Marxist at the time Barrett writes about, though we retained some of the historical sense with which Marxism is endowed. As for modernism, we did not go over to the antimodernists, who were endorsing a more popular and more wholesome idea of culture, but we were aware that the modernism of Joyce and Kafka was becoming a thing of the past.

I think the main distortions in Barrett's account come from two sources: his neo-conservative ideology, and his intellectual design, which requires a representative figure. Barrett singles out Hannah Arendt, Mary McCarthy, and Harold Rosenberg as possible representative figures, but rejects them as insufficiently representative. Yet his choice of Philip Rahv as the representative figure makes the picture even more askew. For Rahv was not representative either in his personal traits or in his politics. At his best, he was a very good editor and critic, and very intelligent when he was not out on some rhetorical limb. However, his personality and behavior were certainly distinctive. He was extraordinarily flamboyant and overbearing in his talk, especially when he felt safe. But as Hannah Arendt once said, he was basically timid and needed approval for all his stands from me and others he worked with. Hence in practice he was most compromising and adaptable. He was even less representative politically. Except for the anticommunism which he shared with all of us, his rhetoric often carried him to extreme positions, from which he had to pull back later. And his movement to the left, to the "radicalism of his youth," which began in the sixties and grew stronger in the last years of his life, was certainly not typical. Nor

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was it then the policy of *Partisan Review*. Nor is it now. In fact, I do not know of any other person close to *Partisan Review* who had either Rahv's personal traits, which Barrett makes out, himself, to be quite unsavory, or his swerving politics, which Barrett condemns. It is Barrett's ideological bias that makes Rahv's late reconversion typical — typical of the failure of what Barrett characterizes as the politics of the Truants, of those, that is, who played hooky from reality. But not even Rahv played hooky; he played with ideas. And if Barrett wants to depict Rahv as a truant, then the question is whether his original leftism, his later anticommunism, or his final radical reversion was the expression of his truancy. And how were the rest of us truants? Barrett suggests our truancy consisted in our critical attitude toward the quality of modern life.

An example of Barrett's ideological inflation of small incidents is his report of a silly encounter between Harold Rosenberg and Philip Rahv. According to Barrett, Rosenberg asked Rahv how *Partisan Review* could have published a supposedly "bourgeois" piece by Trilling. This kind of banter and political baiting was not uncommon at the time, as we were all shifting, and watching each other's shifts. And Rahv considered it worse to be *accused* of moving an inch to the right than of having betrayed a friend, which involves only sentiment. But this was only talk. Rosenberg was obviously posturing and using the occasion to indicate his superior editorial nose. And Rahv was also posturing and protecting his left flank, without having to do anything about it. For the fact is that Rahv's genuflection to the left did not reflect editorial policy, and Trilling was welcome to publish in *Partisan Review* and did so.

Ideology makes not only for strange bedfellows but for strange divorces. It is part of Barrett's thesis to claim that the editors of *Partisan Review* and those close to them did not follow the logic of their position and end up as neo-conservatives. Now this is based on the assumption that all anticommunist roads must lead to neo-conservatism. But, as Trotsky once said of Stalin: Barrett assumes what he has to prove. Barrett puts Trilling somewhere in the middle: as one who foreshadowed neo-conservatism but did not go all the way. This reminds one of the Podhoretz argument that Trilling, like a few other anticommunists, including myself, pulled back from neo-conservatism out of fear of being ostracized by the Left. However, as I have indicated elsewhere, neither I nor Irving Howe nor Lionel Trilling were scared to become neo-conservatives. What was there to be scared of? We were always being criticized by the Left. And now, after all, the neo-conservatives have been riding

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high. The fact is that Howe and I have been critical of neo-conservatism on political and cultural grounds, though we grant that they are right in some matters. And Trilling, aside from his political convictions, did not like extreme positions of any kind. I recall Trilling one evening telling Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter that he felt *Commentary* was becoming too ideological and too predictable.

I cannot leave the subject without noting that Barrett assumes attitudes now that he did not have earlier. Why, for example, does he now glamorize Mary McCarthy and Hannah Arendt? Aside from ideology, it is hard to understand Barrett's personal reasons for inflating Rahv's role on the magazine and in the intellectual community as a whole. Nor can I comprehend why he dedicated his book to Rahv and Schwartz, unless it was meant ironically. For, if the truth is to be known, Rahv was bent on putting down everyone, including Barrett, and I was kept busy defending him. On the other hand, Barrett, himself, was always critical of Rahv's mind and character. Barrett's feelings about Schwartz are more understandable. They were those of a devoted friend—perhaps in the beginning, too devoted—and though Schwartz lost no opportunity to exploit that relationship, there was a good deal of respect and affection between them, until Schwartz's madness made any relation impossible. Could it be that Barrett is retroactively putting himself in the same relation to Rahv? If so, the ideological reason would be clear, but the personal one remains obscure. It seems to me that in placing himself now in this relation to Rahv, Barrett not only distorts Rahv's role and character, and hence some of the history of the magazine, but also does himself an injustice. For in inflating Rahv, Barrett diminishes everyone else, including himself. And although Barrett did not seek the limelight, he does not have to yield it to Rahv.

Hilton Kramer's review of *The Truants* in the *New York Times Book Review* follows Barrett's script, but, lacking Barrett's personal memories, it is necessarily even more ideological. Kramer, of course, is well known as an antimodernist and a leading spokesman for the neo-conservative politics that dominate a number of publications in this country and command the allegiance of many writers and social commentators.

W.P.

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Ksawery Pruszynski

TWO MEN WHO DISAPPEARED

In the early fall of 1939, shortly after the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland, two internationally known Jewish Socialist leaders, Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter, were arrested by the NKVD. Both were accused of connections with the "international bourgeoisie" and of collaboration with the Polish counterintelligence. In both instances the original death sentences were commuted to ten years of hard labor. Erlich and Alter were released in September 1941 on the basis of an agreement which, after the Nazi invasion, Stalin concluded with the Polish government in exile and which called for the release of all Polish citizens arrested or interned in the Soviet Union. For over two months they were treated as personae gratae *by the Soviet authorities, and drawn into talks about their possible participation in the about-to-be-formed Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. On December 4 they were summoned to what appeared to be another meeting and never returned. The inquiries on the part of the Polish ambassador as well as of various American public figures were met with stalling and evasion until February 1943, when the Soviet ambassador to the U.S., Maxim Litvinov, conveyed to William Green Molotov's message that E. and A. were executed for conducting defeatist propaganda among the Soviet troops.*
Translator's Note*

It must have happened sometime during the first ten days of September 1941 in Moscow: one late afternoon Wladyslaw Broniewski** and I found ourselves in the Metropole Hotel restaurant right after the regular guests had left. We had just started dinner when two men entered the room. It was obvious that they were not Russians but they did not look like foreigners, either. At first glance

*What follows is a slightly abridged English version of an article which appeared on April 25, 1943, in a London-based Polish emigré journal, *Nowa Polska* (New Poland). Its author was a prominent publicist and essayist of a moderately conservative persuasion, who at the time of writing was a press attaché to the Polish embassy in the Soviet Union. The article was translated by Iza and Victor Erlich.

**The leading Polish left-wing poet, who like Pruszynski was associated with the Polish embassy in Russia in the fall of 1941.

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they belonged to that distinctive and rare category—those just released from a Soviet prison. Broniewski took a close look and recognized them; they in turn recognized him. After a while they came to our table. They introduced themselves: Henryk Erlich, Victor Alter.

I already knew that these two leaders of the Bund had just been released from jail, that they had visited our embassy and talked to the ambassador. But I had not yet had the chance to see them. I must confess that I was not particularly eager to meet them. Of the many Jewish political parties, I was least familiar with the Bund. It did not seem to me very interesting. The conservatism of the Hassidim was very exotic; Zionism with its Palestinian yearnings had something romantic and unreal about it. Revisionism* with its shirts (I don't remember what color shirts these Jewish fascists wore) was something one would not expect from Polish Jewry. The Bund, from a distance, appeared to be one of the sects of the Marxist faith that had fallen out with Soviet Communism but had not integrated itself into the Polish Socialist Party. One did not associate the concept of the Bund either with the traditional synagogue or with the Palestinian kibbutz. It conjured up rather the image of the wretched human dust—those little tailors and shoemakers, more destitute than the poorest factory workers, the tattered multitudes which on holiday afternoons would fill the shabby markets of Sieradz, Wolkowysk, or Lida.**

In the previous few days I had many occasions to meet people emerging from a Soviet jail. Some were strangely excited, feverish, agitated. Others, conversely, were apathetic; they would hold back and avoid one's eyes. The prison pressed upon them in a variety of ways but always visibly. As soon as I saw Alter and Erlich I knew: they were different. It was not that they were more quiet or more excited than the others; it was rather that they did not seem to be thrown off balance by their prison experience. True, I did not know them before; my impression could have been wrong. Undoubtedly, they had aged; their health too must have suffered. But psychologically they seemed to be untouched by it all, as if there were no connection between their bodies and their souls. In fact, it was easy to

*Reference to the militant, right-wing brand of Zionism, marked, i.a., by its paramilitary organizations.

**Central and Eastern Polish towns with a large Jewish population. The disparaging reference to the Bund's constituency reflects Pruszynski's candidly admitted bias.

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imagine that they had never been imprisoned. Only their new and shoddy suits bore an unmistakable stamp of having just been issued to them when, after a bath and a copious breakfast, they were being let out of Lubianka.

I was already used to the idea that the leaders of the Left had a much more intellectual bent than the leaders of the Right. But Erlich and Alter did not fit at all my simplistic notion of what the leaders of the Bund should have looked like. Their words and movements were marked by a kind of restraint which in the nineteenth century one would have attributed to good breeding, and which many of us who have emigrated learn to associate with British manners. Their self-assurance was quiet, far from aggressive. Their conversation never turned into peroration. Their listening was never tinged with indifference; it was careful, friendly, and attentive. They made an impression of people who were beyond and above themselves and who looked at everything, including themselves, from some other, more distant vantage point. Perhaps even during those weeks spent in a death cell, they looked at their fate as if it were not their own and as if what was happening to them was not the most important thing.

Actually, they were not at all alike. Victor Alter was a man of quick and lively temperament. He was a man of action rather than of reflection, of argument rather than of contemplation. Even his memory did not seem impaired by his prison ordeal: he remembered articles, books, positions taken on this or that issue before the war. As soon as he would sit down to dinner he would get involved in polemics and argument. It seemed that he derived less satisfaction from his newly regained freedom or from the outbreak of the war between Germany and Soviet Russia than from the fact that he, and the Bund, correctly predicted the course of events. Alter was educated as a chemical engineer; in prison he wrote a book in that field. One could sense in him the pleasure of an inventor whose experiment has gone well and whose calculation has turned out to be correct. He took this as proof that he did not err in other predictions either.

Erlich was different. All I said about restraint and the sense of measure was mainly applicable to him. One could even assume that his presence had a cooling and restraining effect upon Alter. He was much older than his comrade or at least appeared so. He was more quiet, more pensive; he was also sadder. If Alter gave the impression that only a day or two weeks earlier he was equally feisty and com-

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bative, Erlich conveyed the sense that amnesty and freedom did not make him any happier. It was as if all that had happened to him somehow was a side issue, only a fraction of what mattered.

People who come out into freedom are first blinded by the sun. It seems to them that the world from which they were excluded must have become better, more radiant, inhabited by angels and led by wise men. The awakening is apt to be that much more painful. This kind of illness is understandable; it is as natural as is, under some conditions, the typhus. One catches it in a way which is mathematically predictable. These two men were the only ones I ever met who did not contract this disease. The irony of it is that of all the Polish political prisoners they were the ones who spent the longest time in Soviet jails: they were arrested as early as September 1939. Nevertheless, when they came out into the world their eyes were not clouded by illusions. They were inquiring about everything with the same curiosity as everybody else. Alter, it seems, was checking off what in fact did happen against what he had anticipated. Sometimes what happened did not correspond to what he had imagined within the four walls of his cell. In those instances it looked as though he was trying to figure out in his mathematician's brain where he went wrong so as to avoid a similar mistake in the future. The expression on Erlich's face as he listened intently seemed to suggest that yes, that was the way things were, and that it was hard to expect them to be any better; in fact, they could have been even worse. Were these two men, in the total isolation of prison, truly cut off from life? No. One in his speculative mind, the mind of a Talmudist, a scholar, a mathematician, a logician, a Marxist, had foreseen the consequences of events which he himself observed or which, in however distorted a form, reached him through the walls of the prison. The other sensed them. For Alter there were few surprises; for Erlich there were none.

I talked on a later occasion with a Catholic priest, a man of high morals and of superior intelligence. He spent some time with Erlich and Alter in one cell. This was a dark moment: France had fallen, the fall of England appeared imminent, the USSR had annexed the Baltic countries. The priest reminisced about the time he had spent with those two Jewish socialists: "They behaved most impressively, unbelievably. I could not understand how these two men who did not have the moral support of religion managed to carry on this way." Much later, already in Kuybyshev, I was in the theater with

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Gózef Czapski,* a giant whose *candeur d'esprit* reminded one of St. Francis and who in his manner remained an aristocrat of the Age of Enlightenment. He maintained that the Soviet theater was a meeting ground for all that remained of old Russian culture. Indeed, the audience did not look at all like a typical Soviet crowd. "Look," said Czapski, "at this man at the entrance. This is surely somebody from the old days." I looked. This man, whom the eye of a painter and a man of society recognized as someone from the old days, was in fact the Chairman of the Bund's Executive Council, Henryk Erlich. He was standing at the threshhold of the hall, looking a bit uncomfortable and distant, lost in thought. He was still dressed in the same suit, made of cheap material and clumsily cut, but worn with quiet distinction. One encounters such faces in group photographs of nineteenth-century socialist conventions, of a Brussels, a Zurich, or a London Congress.

The interrogations in Soviet jails are often reminiscent of medieval religious disputes. The interrogator is not only a political inquisitor but also an ideological polemicist. In a contemporary trial, conviction hinges on proving the defendant's guilt rather than on his confession. But as we know, in the inquisition trials, confession was essential, hence the use of torture as the most effective way to extract it. The Soviet trial has the same aim—that of "convincing" the one who is judged or at least of winning the debate. The interrogator has to be a trained debater. For a run-of-the-mill Soviet interrogator, discussions with Erlich and Alter were comparable to a tournament between a small-time chess player and a Grand Master. The inquisitor would find himself in an impossible situation: he had to admit either the absurdity of his position or Stalin's fallibility.

The Soviet prison system was reminiscent of the prisons in the periods of the religious wars in yet another respect: it came down hardest on the dissidents. The Spanish Inquisition, as is well known, was much gentler in dealing with the heathen Aztecs, the Moslem Arabs, or even the schismatic Slavs. It unleashed its greatest fury toward Protestants, toward those who left Rome, especially if they had done so recently or covertly. Those Poles who assumed that the chief targets of Soviet repression would be a prince, a landowner, a priest, a semifascist politician, or a banker were surprised to learn that the first ones to be arrested and the last ones to be released were

*a noted Polish painter and essayist.

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the people of the Left. The fate of the apostate is the worst, and a Bundist was seen as such. Moscow knew infinitely more about Alter and Erlich than it did about the Polish counts, Pilsudski's colonels, or right-wing Polish nationalists. I could even say that from Moscow's point of view the latter were quite harmless, if not actually useful. All a Bolshevik who wanted to suggest that Poland was a feudal country had to do was to say "Radziwill."* If he meant to imply that Poland was ruled by a military junta, he could simply say "Slawek."** If he intended to highlight Poland's petit bourgeois character, he could say "Dmowski."*** No one could expect the political allies of Prince Radziwill to turn Communist, less still anticipate such a shift on the part of conservative university students, political army officers, or right-wing shopkeepers. But the masses of the Jewish proletariat in Poland and in the world were viewed by Moscow as their potential property, as reserves from which they would annually draw recruits. And to draw those recruits away was a crime. Now that was precisely what Erlich and Alter were doing. If any Jewish working man was not a Communist, that was because Erlich and Alter were able to explain to him that the dawn which rose in the East was not the dawn of real socialism and that people who came after Lenin would join hands with the fascists. No wonder that from the Soviet point of view Alter and Erlich would have been the most dangerous people in Poland, even if, the day after the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact and on the eve of September 1, 1939, they had not drawn in the newspapers, read like a Bible by the Jewish working masses, a magnificent indictment that began with a cry: betrayal!

Shortly after their release the two men became targets of a whispering campaign which did not originate solely with the Soviets. Some people visiting the embassy, friendly, amiable, and eager people, would make casual inquiries: "Is it really a good thing that Alter and Erlich talk so much to Englishmen and Americans? Yesterday somebody saw them with a correspondent X. Is it true that they were with the diplomat Z?" I don't know how other members of the

*Prince Radziwill was a powerful Eastern Polish magnate.

**One of "Pilsudski's colonels," Walery Slawek headed the last prewar Polish government.

***The founder and ideologist of the National Democratic party whose brand of nationalism, strongly tinged with anti-Semitism, had a special appeal to the Polish lower middle class.

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embassy responded to these insistently recurrent questions, but I assume that a typical reaction was roughly as follows: "I don't know if it is a good or bad thing. We have neither the possiblity nor the right to tell our citizens to whom they may or may not talk. We are not a totalitarian country. Did they see the Ambassador Z? We don't know. Should we know? Why? Are we a police state?" This in turn would elicit a condescending smile on the visitor's face, or a remark: "Well, the NKVD knows." "Yes, but we are not the NKVD." The smile lingered. "Well, you should not be so wary of the NKVD. The NKVD is in some ways a very wise institution, it just ought to be used for proper purposes." The phrase fell silent, unfinished, but the thought which it brought to the fore persisted. And I recalled the prediction made once by Broniewski and Alter: people who come out of Russia will never be enthusiasts of the kolkhoz system, worshippers of Five-Year Plans or propagandists for Magnitogorsk, but how they will view the NKVD is not quite clear. The Soviet economic system will not have their admiration, but whether they will not be inclined to take back home some aspects of the Soviet power system, that is quite another matter.

In the meantime Alter and Erlich did talk with many foreigners. In this respect they were like many other Poles who came out of the camps. Foreigners made a point of seeking them out. This was hardly surprising. A foreigner in Russia sees very little. For the first time there was occasion to talk to men who came out of the Butyrki or Lubianka prisons, men who faced death sentences. They were a large and colorful group. There were splendid-looking generals like Anders with his large-scale military calculations and plans, there were brilliant conversationalists, politicians, writers, Jesuits. But intellectually, Alter and Erlich rose above everyone in this conclave. These spokesmen of the ghettos were the least parochial, the most European figures in the group. Even if they did not speak as good an English as some others, the tenor of their English was twentieth century rather than eighteenth century. For Quentin Reynolds, for Philip Jordan, for the best journalists sent by the largest concerns and the most responsible newspapers, they were both the least exotic and the most credible witnesses.

The sniping of the zealots went on unabated. "What are they saying to this Englishman about Lvov or Vilna?" "Well, probably the same they were saying back in Poland." "Well, a fine thing. Don't you know that the Bund was pretty nearly a Bolshevik party?" "Is that why their leaders were promptly arrested?" "Oh, we know

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better." This, as we all know, is the last resort of malice—a quality which is never in short supply among us.

When a few weeks later I visited our army camps, it turned out that what in the embassy circles was insidiously whispered here was announced through a loudspeaker. A prominent person told me bluntly: "You understand, we all like very much Professor Kot,* but some goings-on are intolerable. I mean the influence which these two men, Alter and Erlich, have on him. This is international Jewry, totally alien influences. These men have no business being part of the entourage of the Polish ambassador." "But they are not." "Oh, I know what I'm talking about." "And what if they were?" "What do you mean?" "The ambassador," I would try to explain, "represents a country which includes not only citizens of the Polish nationality. We have, in particular on our Eastern borders, other nationalities as well." "It's too bad you didn't see how these other nationalities behaved after September 17." "No, I did not see this, but our position is that whatever acts of disloyalty did occur reflect on only a part of this population. The leaders of the strongest and the most radical movement among the Jewish minority proved by their behavior that they were loyal Poles. This, I feel, is what we should be emphasizing."

But there was also sniping from the other side. And this time it was scarcely a matter of misperception. Stories about anti-Semitic incidents in the Polish army would travel to Kuybyshev very rapidly. Their magnified echoes promptly reached the ears of the representatives of the West—members of the embassies and of the press corps. Poles, who were widely admired, when they hastened upon release from Soviet prisons and camps to take up arms on the side of those who had imprisoned them, were now portrayed as unreconstructed anti-Semites. We were losing the sympathy of the West, which at that point was essential to us.

Alter and Erlich knew this and agonized over it. They felt that our authorities were not doing everything that was within their power to curb the abuses. But they were ready to use the credibility they had acquired vis-à-vis a small group of foreigners in the drab town on the Volga to place those matters in proper perspective and reduce them to proper size. They were convinced that some alien elements were at work there, elements which were discomfited by

*Prof. Stanislaw Kot, a liberal politician and a distinguished cultural historian, was at the time the Polish ambassador to the Soviet Union.

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the presence of the Polish minorities in the Polish army. After all, in the fall of 1939 it was proclaimed that these minorities no longer wanted Poland. Now, under foreign eyes, Jews and Ukrainians flocked to the Polish army that was being formed on the Soviet soil. Was not this the best plebiscite? "You understand," said Alter, "that if Prince Sapieha tells a representative of world opinion that he wants Vilna to be part of Poland this does not make too strong an impression. After all, Prince Sapieha is a Polish landowner; he owns forests and land near Wilno. But I do not own any land near Vilna; I'm not a prince. I'm not even a Pole. I'm a Jew and a socialist; in fact, I'm reputed to be a pretty left-wing socialist. If I, a leader of the Jewish workers, opt for Poland, that has a very different resonance from the statements of a local landowner or a local district attorney. You are not going to convince anyone that this region is ethnically Polish, or that Jews and Ukrainians have nothing to say about its fate."

I understood this but I am afraid that not everybody did. Not infrequently Alter's and Erlich's efforts at conciliation fell on deaf ears, but they persisted in their attempts to offset the negative reports that in an oddly systematic manner were reaching foreign ears. They became increasingly active. At the same time their contacts with the West grew closer. They were about to become correspondents for a major Jewish labor newspaper in the United States.*

It is possible that the very quality that so impressed every foreigner that came into contact with Erlich and Alter proved their undoing. They were truly nineteenth-century men. They were social democrats of the vintage Kautsky, Jaurès, Liebknecht, Vandervelde, enriched, perhaps, by the experiences of our time but formed by that earlier period. Their socialism was libertarian and not totalitarian; theirs was a revolution of the barricades, not of the GPU. Their ideas, speech patterns, modes of argument, ideals, likes, and dislikes were deeply rooted in the moral climate of the West. In the countries of Eastern Europe these values, one fears, are gone with the wind.

Those whom the two men inconvenienced the most were the first to act. One night while in a Kuybyshev hotel restaurant, Alter was called to the phone. He came back after a moment, looking animated, ready as always for argument, for polemic. He said to his comrade, "Henryk, we are expected."

And they went out into the dark Russian December night. They were never to emerge from it.

*Reference to the New York *Jewish Daily Forward*.

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Jan Kott

A CAGE IN SEARCH OF A BIRD

For Stefan Żółkiewski

I

In his admirable study, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, Gershom Scholem cites a parable from *Patrologia Graeca* which Origen has included in his commentary on the Psalms, attributing it to an unknown rabbi from the Talmudic Academy in Caesarea. The Bible and all the sacred texts are like a castle with thousands and thousands of rooms. At the foot of the door to each room lies a key, but a key to *another* door.

It is entirely possible that Kafka knew this parable. But I am not concerned here with the direct influence, as philologists understand it, of the Kabbalah on Kafka's symbolism. I am more interested in the *reading* of this parable. What is a wrong key? A wrong key is the right key—for another door. This distinction between right and wrong keys may be arbitrary, and is apparent only with reference to one door. Perhaps another distinction is more to the point: doors only, and not keys, are either right or wrong. There are no wrong keys, but each key fits just one lock. The one and only key that opens every door is the false key, the lock picker's key. No key is false in the parable about keys by the Talmudist from Caesarea; however, every key opens just one door, and all the keys have been interchanged.

But by whom? Who has interchanged the keys? And why? Was it chance or an unforeseeable intervention of cosmic forces? Was it UFOs or a practical joke? Simple mismanagement or a servant's revenge? Or maybe it was a trial set up by the castle's warden, or even by the Lord. Who has the answer?

A key is an object; it could also be a prop. "The spirit becomes free," writes Kafka in his *Reflections on Sin, Pain, Hope and the True*

This essay was translated from Polish by Michael Kott.

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Way, "only when it ceases to be a prop."* The *key*, of course, is not merely an object or a prop; it is also a sign. Interpretation is also the interchange of keys in some of the great schools of modern gnosis: the "prop key" is exchanged for the "key symbol." But not only keys are exchanged. As objects or props, doors and rooms also can be symbolic signs, likewise the castle (*das Schloss*) and the lock (*das Schloss*).

There are two main symbolic or allegorical interpretations of Kafka's world. Either the Grand Warden who interchanged the keys is the Hidden God, *deus absconditus*, or there is only the alien world of objects from which man has been estranged, and no hidden warden exists. The parable about keys, like the keys themselves, is exchanged for theological discourse or Hegelian and Marxist discourse about alienation. However, right or wrong, whether they fit or not, keys are material and nothing can be done about that.

The parable about keys is a situation based on a familiar, almost universal, experience. Most likely, each of us has received, more than once, a key that did not fit the lock. Presented as a short story, the parable is at once plausible, lifelike, and theatrical. Let us imagine the annual convention of the Modern Language Association. Three thousand participants meet at one of the huge Hiltons. The keys have been interchanged and each of the three thousand scholars stands before the door to his hotel room with a key to another door.

Translated into a lifelike and theatrical situation, the parable about keys is ridiculous, grotesque, and absurd. Yet the symbolic interpretation of this scene is a philosophical discourse, an instance of negative theology. We are already in the world of Kafka's *Trial*.

> 'You have studied the story more exactly and for a longer time than I have,' said Joseph K. toward the end of his encounter with the prison chaplain in the cathedral. They were both silent for a little while. Then K. said, 'So you think that man was not deluded?' 'Don't misunderstand me,' said the priest, 'I am only showing you the various opinions concerning that point. You must not pay too much attention to them. The scriptures are unalterable and the comments often enough merely express the commentators' bewilderment.'

*All the quotations from Kafka are from Willa and Edwin Muir's translations.

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A commentary is a key, but to another door in a castle with thousands of rooms. The way to hell—the chaplain might have added—is paved with good commentaries. Hence the bewilderment of commentators.

II

Zen Buddhism, like the Kabbalah, is a symbolic interpretation of eternal Truth and the essence of Being. Truth is nondiscursive and may be grasped or summoned with a symbolic gesture rather than articulated in language. Chü Chich of the ninth century is regarded as one of the greatest masters of Zen Buddhism. A parable about this celebrated master has survived and is cited in the excellent study *Sense and Nonsense in Zen Buddhism* by Toshihiko Izutsu, a phenomenologist and one of the leading scholars of oriental philosophy.

> This Master, whenever and whatever he was asked about Zen, used to stick up one finger. . . . 'What is the supreme and absolute Truth?'—answer: the silent raising of one finger. 'What is the essence of Buddhism?'—answer: again the selfsame silent raising of one finger.*

The master's favorite was a young boy who had been put under his tutelage and who served him at home. The boy carefully observed his master and, as pupils usually do, began to imitate him. Whenever he was asked about Zen or Buddha, he, like his teacher, raised his index finger. When the master found out what the boy had been doing behind his back, he became furious. One morning he hid a sharp knife in the sleeve of his kimono, summoned the boy, and asked him:

> 'What is Buddha?' The boy stuck up one finger. Master Chü Chich suddenly took hold of the boy and cut off with the knife the finger which the boy had just raised. As the poor boy was running out of the room screaming with pain, the Master called to him. At that very moment quick as lightning came the

*Toshihiko Izutsu, "Sense and Nonsense in Zen Buddhism," *Eranos 1970* (Leiden: 1973), V. 39, pp. 184-86.

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> Master's question: 'What is Buddha?' Almost by conditioned reflex, we might say, the boy held up his hand to raise his finger. There was no finger there. The boy on the spot attained enlightenment.

He now knows who Buddha is. The sign of Being is non-Being, and the sign of presence is absence.

Modern masters of linguistics and semantics, Barthes and Jakobson, call this type of sign the "zero sign." The lack or absence of a sign, when we are expecting one, is also a sign. Nonpresence also presents itself. The telephone's silence when we cannot bear the waiting is more potent than the voice in the receiver. The lack, the absence, is significant.

"What is laid upon us," writes Kafka in the 24th aphorism in *Reflections*, "is to accomplish the negative; *the positive* is already given" (italics mine). In the metaphysic of "negative theology," nonpresence is the one sign of God's presence. And exactly this term, "negative theology," has been invoked repeatedly in the hermeneutics on Kafka.

The parable about the Buddhist monk and his disciple has all the ambiguity of Kafka's short stories. And it is not necessary to read this parable in the light of negative theology. Pointing the finger upwards and raising the hand with its finger amputated are gestures in the Brechtian sense of *gestus*. Walter Benjamin, in one of his essays on Kafka, showed for the first time the role and meaning of the gesture as a dramatic device, or better, of the theatrical sign in Kafka's stories.

The ninth-century parable about the cut-off finger, which is a sign of non-Being, could be both performed and drawn. The parable would then become graphic; but as soon as a parable is visualized, it takes on a different meaning. Drawn, it becomes a comic strip, with the dialogue coming out of the mouths of characters in bubbles; performed, it is a burlesque, as in a Renaissance interlude or a *kyogen* mime in the tradition of Japanese theater. The parable becomes a cruel farce, eliciting raucous laughter from the spectators.

The absent finger is no longer the Buddha, nor a Platonic form inaccessible to the senses: it is the finger of a pupil cut off by the knife of a cruel and jealous guru. As in Kafka, *gestus*, the gesture in this parable, is polysemic; when read as a *picture*, it belongs to another system of signs. The raised finger and the amputated finger become obscene signs, as in the carnival tradition, in Rabelais, and in

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Gombrowicz's theater. The sense of the signs has been reversed. Metaphysics has become physics, that is to say, carnal.

III

"A cage in search of a bird," the 13th and shortest aphorism in Kafka's *Reflections*, is even more graphic than the Zen parable. The cage floats in the air seeking a motionless bird. I see this aphorism as a drawing or a short sequence in an animated cartoon. Jan Lenica would have made it into a little masterpiece.

Translated into a *picture*, this aphorism is an emblem. It seems to belong to the great tradition of emblematic art that flourished in Italy, and even more in Germany, during the late Renaissance and the Baroque period. An emblem is a picture of a paradox or a gnome. One of the best-known emblems represents "the serpent eating its own tail."

Emblems can be given an almost unlimited number of symbolic or paradigmatic readings. "The cage" that goes "in search" of a bird, the cage in motion, the active cage may signify within a given symbolic code the devil's snare for catching souls, a spiritual trap, Calvinistic predetermination of the saved and the damned; or, in political terms, the cage is the state and the state is a prison. In Freudian symbolism, the searching cage might be an image of the superego.

In *The Trial*, the cage comes one morning to Joseph K. as Death does to the sinner in the greatest masterpiece of medieval drama, *Everyman*. *The Trial* is a story, yet it is equally as graphic, and nearly as theatrical, as *Everyman*. With its concretization of gestures, interiors, and movements, *The Trial* can be easily visualized. Kafka's *Trial* is not waiting for its adaptation for theater and film—those have been done already—but for its transposition onto the stage or screen: its transcription.

A graphic transcription is a desymbolization, a deallegorization, or, to use a more fashionable term, a deconstruction. *Graph* and the graphic reading are sudden and violent visualizations of unexpected and unsuspected hidden relations. The discovery of the hidden is a shock in Max Ernst's paintings and perhaps even more in Magritte's. A book about Kafka's influence on postmodernist visual art has yet to be written.

The symbolic hermeneutic changes the *graph* or the *picture* back into an allegory or a metaphor: "the cage" is a metaphor, "went in

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search" is a metaphor, "the bird" is a metaphor. But what is ingenious about Kafka's cage is the unexpected metonymy, not the conventional symbolism and metaphor.* The metaphoric reading of this aphorism is trivial.

Metaphor is based on the transference of meanings, on similarity or the illusion of similarity. Metonymy is based on the relations of contiguity and succession. Moreover, as Frazer had described long before the structuralists and semanticists, metonymy is marked by the relation of contagion and contamination. Dread of *miasma* is born of the metonymic imagination. Kafka knew this fear and this dread.

The relation between the predator and its prey, between the hunter and the hunted, is also metonymic. The relation between the cage and the bird is metonymic. The searching cage-above-all is metonymy in motion. *L'imaginaire* is reality.

IV

The striking and revealing metonymy, which destroys allegory, is even more evident in Kafka's "Four Legends Concerning Prometheus." According to the first legend, "Prometheus was chained to a rock in the Caucasus for betraying the secrets of the gods to men, and the gods sent eagles to feed on his liver, which was perpetually renewed." According to the second, "Prometheus, goaded by the pain of the tearing beaks, pressed himself deeper and deeper into the rock until he became one with it."

The end of Prometheus is the end of mythology. "There remained the inexplicable mass of rock." In Michelangelo's unfinished statues of the Slaves, their bodies, as if in the pangs of birth, struggle to break out of the blocks of stone. Kafka's vision is different: Prometheus is one with the rock. The end of Prometheus and the end of the myth is *stasis*. The metonymy of the end is the undifferentiated mountain of stone.

The mountain under the empty sky remains as the last imprint of myth. Kafka's metonymy found its final dramatic fulfillment in Beckett's stasis. In *Happy Days* a woman sinks into a mound of sand under an empty sky.

Kafka's Poseidon has also been stripped of his mythological attire. "Poseidon sat at his desk doing figures. The administration of

*Kafka despised literary metaphors. He wrote in his diary on December 6, 1921, "Metaphors are among many things which make me despair of writing."

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all the waters gave him endless work." What irritates Kafka's Poseidon most is that he is invariably presented "riding about through the tides with his trident." In fact, "he had hardly seen the sea." His office is located deep in the earth, beneath all the oceans. He sits there day and night doing involved calculations and drawing diagrams. He has no time for travel. What possible use could he have for the trident?

I see Kafka's Poseidon in a fusty, stifling room like the court chambers in *The Trial*. In his hand he is holding an old rusty compass, on the table lies an abacus. This version of the myth about Poseidon also ends like *Prometheus*, with the final stasis. In the end, Poseidon has become bored with his job; he can endure it no longer. "Silently he sat on the rocky coast and a gull, dazed by his presence, described wavering circles around his head."

Kafka's dead-tired Poseidon who sits on a rock by the sea can be found in Camus's image of Sisyphus, who, having descended from the mountain, sits at its foot, as the same boulder he has pushed up to the top an infinite number of times rolls down to the bottom, once more. Sisyphus understands his fate. In the universe suddenly restored to its silence, "His fate belongs to him." Camus concludes, "One must imagine Sisyphus happy."

Camus's Sisyphus will once again roll the rock to the top of the mountain. Poseidon's and Sisyphus's work is never done. Kafka's Poseidon heads the global enterprise, *Oceans and Storms, Ltd.* Deadly bored with his job, he is waiting for the end of the world. Only then will he be able to go to the beach and silently watch the sea. Only then will he be able to imagine himself happy.

All Kafka's mythical heroes have been deprived of classical decorum and are of this world, from Prometheus to Abraham. Two different Abrahams appear in Kafka's parables. The first Abraham "couldn't go away . . . without having his house ready . . . the house was never ready." It is possible that Abraham and Sarah "did not even have a son, yet already had to sacrifice him. These are impossibilities and Sarah was right to laugh."

Kafka's second Abraham

> wanted to perform the sacrifice in the right way . . . but could not believe that he was the one meant, he, an ugly old man, and a dirty youngster that was his child. He was afraid that the world would laugh itself to death at the sight of him . . . the ridiculousness will make him even older and uglier, his son even dirtier, even more unworthy of being really called. . . . It is as if,

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> at the end of the year, when the best student was solemnly about to receive a prize, the worst student rose . . . from his dirty desk in the last row because he had made a mistake of hearing, and the whole class burst out laughing.

This is how Kafka concludes his parable about Abraham:

> And perhaps, he had made no mistake at all, his name really was called, it having been the teacher's intention to make the rewarding of the best student at the same time a punishment for the worst one.

Kafka surely knew Kierkegaard's "Panegyric upon Abraham" in *Fear and Trembling*. For Kierkegaard, the patriarch is not a tragic hero; he "is either a murderer or a believer." Abraham knows no doubt. Like Tertulian's *credo quia absurdum*, Abraham has faith "by virtue of the absurd," as Kierkegaard puts it. But what is faith for Kafka? "Faith like a guillotine," writes Kafka in the 83rd aphorism in *Reflections*, "as heavy, as light."

"Faith like a guillotine. . ." seems to be the most Kierkegaardian line of all Kafka wrote. Once again, this aphorism, translated into a picture, made concrete, loses its metaphysical meaning. Faith like a guillotine is a trial that ends in execution.

> . . .but one of the partners was already at K.'s throat, while the other thrust the knife deep into his heart and turned it there twice. With failing eyes K. could still see the two of them immediately before him, cheek leaning against cheek, watching the final act.

"Faith like a guillotine, so heavy, so light."

V

Eliade and many historians of religion use the term *tremendum* to designate mystical experiences. *Tremendum* is the sudden apprehension of God's presence and of the approach of death. *Tremendum* is enlightenment full of dread and exhilaration. In Kafka's world, of this mystical *tremendum*, only the *horrendum* remains. Faith like a guillotine. For anthropologists, the sacred and the impure are closely related; they belong to the same prohibited zone and are marked by the same taboo, even though their signs are reversed or, at any rate, reversible. Both the sacred and the impure

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are dreadful. But in Kafka's world the sacred does not exist, only dread is left.

Kafka's life, and especially the last ten years, might be given the Kierkegaardian title *Sickness unto Death*. Fear and trembling can be found on almost every page of his diaries, letters, and stories. It is, however, a different kind of fear and a different kind of trembling than in Kierkegaard.

As his diaries show, Kafka was scared to death of mice. When he heard them squealing and scratching, he would tremble and become nauseous. The example is vulgar. Nevertheless, in Kafka's life, in almost everything he wrote, horror is always physical, always of the flesh. Dread, *horrendum*, *Angst*—and this is one of the singularities of Kafka's writing—always mean humiliation and shame, and are often ridiculous. As Max Brod attests, Kafka roared with laughter when he read his work to his friends. The same has been said of Gogol. But in Kafka, this Gogolian "horrible laughter" is even more horrible.

When the artist in *A Hunger Artist* is carried out of his cage after many weeks of fasting, he whispers dimly into the ear of the circus overseer, "I have to fast, I can't help it. . . . I couldn't find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else."

The canine narrator of *Investigation of a Dog* is upset and astonished that food sometimes is found on the ground, and sometimes falls from above into his mouth. He decides to retire to a secluded spot and wait for food from above. But no food falls from the sky.

In Kafka's world, the hungry await nourishment from heaven. Yet the image of this metaphysical hunger is a hunger artist in a circus cage, and a dog squatting on his hind legs with his mouth agape. In Kafka's world there is no God and no biblical Abraham. All that remains of Abraham is the everpresent dreadful shadow of the vindictive Father. There is no Sinai and no mount of Moriah; instead of the chosen, there are only the sacrificed. From the biblical *arche* there remains only Isaac, but an Isaac without God or Abraham. Isaac is murdered with a knife thrust into his heart and turned there twice. This is why Kafka is often read as a foreshadowing of the Holocaust.

"Someone must have traduced Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning." He waited in vain for the landlady's cook to bring him breakfast as usual. Two strangers had eaten it and entered his bedroom. Gregor Samsa also

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waited in vain for his breakfast; he "awoke one morning from uneasy dreams, and found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect."

The initial shock is different in *The Trial* than in *The Metamorphosis*. But in both stories, as always in Kafka, there is no escaping the *horrendum* which swells gradually within a tightly sealed world. In *The Trial*, the whole town is transformed into stuffy, dirty rooms in attics and cellars all owned by the court and into dusty dark staircases, which K. indefatigably ascends and descends answering summonses or seeking counsel. Connected with the court, professionally or intimately, are all of K.'s acquaintances and everyone he encounters; it is as if the whole town were made up only of judges, guards, bailiffs, lawyers, and legal secretaries. Even the clerks at the bank where K. works, even his own uncle, even Fräulein Bürstner, who is renting a room from K.'s landlady, are associated with the court. Even the washerwomen all wash the judges' linen, even the painters paint only their portraits.

In *The Metamorphosis*, the whole world is reduced to a small apartment on the second or third floor of an old tenement. Behind the closed doors to the family dining room, Gregor Samsa, who has been transformed into a giant centipede, walks along the walls or naps clinging to the ceiling in his room, which has been emptied of all furniture. On the other side of the wall, mother, father, and sister speak in hushed tones and eat human food. Gregor Samsa is unable to produce a human sound; rotting remnants of human food are brought by his sister into his room, and this not even every day.

Both stories end with death. "Like a dog"—those are K.'s last words. Dogs are not put to death by stabbing them in the heart. Joseph K., everyman, is not killed like a dog, but he dies "like a dog." Death—the last horror is senseless, .athless and hopeless. " 'Like a dog!' he said; it is as if the shame of it must outlive him." Gregor Samsa dies like a dog, on the stairs, in darkness, turned out of his apartment, alone. The door slams. The living remain on the other side.

Our own *horrendum* bears Kafka's signature. One morning we will not have our breakfast. Two strangers will walk into our room. One morning we will wake up transformed in our bed into a monstrous worm. We are under arrest. We have cancer.

Kafka's *l'imaginaire* is our reality. The cage has found a bird. The telephone is still ringing, but there is no longer anyone at the other end.

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Eugene Goodheart

AN INTERVIEW WITH AMOS OZ

Amos Oz lives in Hulda, a thriving kibbutz not far from Tel Aviv. My wife and I arrived at Hulda in 1981 on a bright March Sunday morning (a work day in Israel) and found ourselves among busy workmen. A worker in a hard hat pointed to a man who would show us the way to Oz's study. Our guide, short, unassuming and friendly, turned out to be General Israel Tal, a deputy defense minister of the Israeli government and, according to Oz, the world's leading authority on tank warfare. Tal is a sympathizer with the Peace Now movement, of which Oz is a member. Young, well-built and ruggedly handsome, Oz greeted us with an old-world courtesy and excused himself for having to delay my interview with him. He and Tal had something to talk over. My wife and I sat on the sofa, while the two men talked. From time to time Tal would interrupt the conversation, conducted in Hebrew (which we did not understand), and ask us in English about our trip to Israel. Why, he asked me, had it taken me so long to make my first trip to Israel? He did not wait for an answer and guessed with absolute accuracy that I was a New Yorker from a radical Yiddishist anti-Zionist background and that my resistance to visiting Israel took longer to overcome than my commitment to radical ideology. He asked me whether I had come to talk to Oz about literature and when I said literature and politics, he smiled and said that Oz had great political capacity, but he had urged him to stay out of politics, so that he could devote himself to what was eternal (art) rather than to what was transient (politics). This mild-mannered man in civilian clothes with an avuncular smile, the father of the Israeli tank, had travelled to the study of a young novelist to discuss the state of the union; he had expressed himself on the eternal value of art. One could expect to find such a combination of events in an improbable fiction or in the reality of the State of Israel.

Eugene Goodheart: I read your books *My Michael* and *The Hill of Evil Counsel* shortly after my arrival here in Jerusalem and found the evocation of the city very moving. I now see the city partly through the eyes of *My Michael*. The sense of the biblical past and the immediate heroic past is very strong but it's coupled with a disturbing and pervasive feeling of melancholy and longing. I was

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particularly struck by a sentence in *The Hill of Evil Counsel*. One of the characters, an immigrant from Germany living in Jerusalem, says he longs for Jerusalem as if he were still in Leipzig. What is the source of this melancholy?

Amos Oz: Let me tell you one or two things about my family because it might help you to understand this particular sentence and perhaps the entire feeling of some of my characters about Jerusalem. I come from a veteran Zionist family, in fact, a militant right-wing Zionist family which originates on my father's side from Odessa. My grandfather was in fact a Zionist before Zionism, back in the nineties of the previous century, meaning he wrote love poems for Zion in Russian. He was still writing love poems for Zion in Russian when he lived in Jerusalem and when he knew Hebrew perfectly well. The reason, as he put it, was that Russian was his gut language. He couldn't utter the word "Russia" without making this wide gesture with his hands—if he had his hands in his pockets, he just couldn't say "Russia." So while being a Zionist he was also a devoted European, a secular Jew, a great admirer of everything that was European: culture, civilization, tradition. In 1918 my grandfather fled Russia and settled in Poland. When anti-Semitism in Poland became unbearable (he was taunted by his neighbors, "Go to Palestine, little Jew"), he decided that Poland wasn't safe anymore, so he tried to become French, British, American, he was even crazy enough to try to become German in 1930. All those countries turned him down: they had enough Jews at that time. So he had to leave Europe and go to Palestine. Anyway, he came to Zion and settled in Jerusalem —with very mixed feelings. It was a strange place: the heat, the Arabs, the atmosphere, the extremely Orthodox Jews. It wasn't his world. And yet he was ideologically committed to Zionism. Having failed in business he went back into writing poetry, still in Russian, and still exactly the same sentimental stuff which he used to write when he was a teenager in Odessa. Jerusalem was a city paved with emeralds and with angels at every street corner. I was around at the time and when an angry young man who read his poems screamed at him, "Come on, you know what Jerusalem's really like, you know the real Jerusalem, you know what the streets are paved with and what we've got here at some street corners." To which he responded by roaring at him, "You idiot, what do you know about the real Jerusalem? The real Jerusalem *is* the Jerusalem of my poems."

Goodheart: The Jerusalem of the imagination.

Oz: My father became a librarian in Jerusalem and divided his life

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between his work as a librarian during the day, and researches in comparative literature. He wrote a few books on comparative literature, European literature, at night. My parents used to talk to me about the vision of Jerusalem becoming one day a real city. It took me quite a long time to decipher what they really meant by "real." By "real," of course, they meant "European," with cathedrals and thick forests round about, and perhaps a river in the middle. So, to some extent, this is the background for that remark.

Goodheart: So the longing that the immigrant from Leipzig feels is the longing of your grandfather, but why would it be the longing of somebody who had been born and raised in Jerusalem?

Oz: I guess my grandparents and my parents wrote the script, so maybe I got some of it into my genes. I first went to Europe fairly late in my life, I was thirty when I first left Israel. For the first time in my life I saw fir trees and snow, and gothic architecture, and heard the church bells, and had the feeling I'd been there before.

Goodheart: The Hasidic zealots of Mea Shearim say that the trouble with Zionism and the trouble with contemporary Israel is that they confuse the actual Jerusalem with spiritual Jerusalem and that you have to wait for the Messiah to come for the real Jerusalem to exist.

Oz: Oh, the whole business is not that clear and unambivalent to me. Jerusalem means various things to various people, as you know. It means various things to me. It's my native city—I was born there. And yet I recall the Jerusalem of my childhood as a strange federation, vague federation of different communities, faiths, backgrounds—it was full of lunatics.

Goodheart: You have said somewhere that it's a place of lunatic dreams.

Oz: Every second Jerusalemite, when I was a kid, must have been a potential Messiah, a redeemer. Each one had his or her personal formula for instant universal redemption.

Goodheart: To shift the perspective a little, the visitor coming to Jerusalem is stimulated by the biblical past and by Israel's immediate heroic past. Israel seems like an heroic society. But I would imagine that the heroism would become oppressive for people actually living in Israel. Somebody says, I think in *The Hill of Evil Counsel*, that we are the heirs of prophets, kings, and heroes. I picked up Moshe Dayan's book on the Bible the other day. He makes a comparison there between Ben Gurion and Moses. There's some basis in reality for that kind of comparison, but isn't there also a danger of self-inflation and self-righteousness?

Oz: Reality has at least a double edge for the Israelis. I would say there is a fascinating difference between daytime Israel and noc-

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turnal Israel. Daytime Israel makes a tremendous effort to create the impression of the determined, tough, simple, uncomplicated society ready to fight back, ready to hit back twice as hard, courageous and so on. Nocturnal Israel is a refugee camp with more nightmares per square mile I guess than any other place in the world. Almost everyone has seen the devil.

Goodheart: What about simply living ordinary lives the way people live ordinary lives in other cities—is that possible? I have heard Israelis say, "Enough of the heroic past, we want peace and when peace comes we will be able to live like other people in other cities."

Oz: I wish I could believe that statement. I mean, I do believe their sincerity, but I suspect in my heart of hearts that the Israelis have developed a certain addiction to drama.

Goodheart: So that if the dramatic present disappeared . . .

Oz: There would be a certain crisis, a certain emptiness, a certain amount of anticlimax which I tried in a way to convey in *My Michael*. *My Michael* is deliberately set in the fifties, and the fifties were "the morning after" in the terms of Israeli history. After the sound and fury of the forties, of the momentous events, the Holocaust, the struggle for independence, independence itself. After that came the fifties: then we had a period of relative peace, a small country with housing problems and everyone had problems, sewage problems—you name it. So, in a sense, I tried to cope with this particular experience in my mind.

Goodheart: So far we've been talking about the Jewish experience in Israel. I'm struck by what I think many visitors are struck by—the diversity of the society, the many groups particularly in Jerusalem and in the Old City. Yet the boundaries are very sharp: it's rare to meet an Arab socially, intermarriage is rarer still. I know that you're concerned about reconciliation between Arabs and Jews. It seems to me that some practical acknowledgment of the Arab reality in Israel has to occur if Israel is going to survive as a society. Under what conditions is such reconciliation possible? Or is it possible?

Oz: I think it is. I don't believe in a redeeming formula, and melodramatic reconciliation, a Dostoevskyan scene of the Israelis and the Arabs hugging one another in tears and brotherly love immediately after the redeeming formula is found. I believe in sad and painful acceptance of realities which are basically painful for Israelis and Palestinians alike, and I specify Palestinians because I believe the crux of the matter is the Israeli-Palestinian question. The Israel-Arab conflict is, relatively speaking, a simple one. The

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crux of the matter is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and here the only way out is a sad acceptance of realities which were totally excluded from the Zionist vision and still are totally excluded from Palestinian consciousness.

Goodheart: What realities?

Oz: The fact that here in this small country there are two different national communities, not just religious or cultural communities, two different national entities exist—and must coexist.

Goodheart: Does that mean self-rule for the Palestinians?

Oz: It means partitioning the country, and I'm not talking right now about the boundaries, I'm not drawing a map. That is irrelevant at the moment because the Palestinians right now are not ready for such an agreement. But I do believe that the only way out, at least in the near future, is a partition. Not that I'm in love with the idea of little national states. When I listen to the brilliant anti-Zionist arguments of George Steiner or Noam Chomsky, to a certain degree I envy these people. Theirs is a simple world. We hear those people one way or another claiming that the Jews are destined to be the vitamin, the fertilizer, the stimulator of Western civilization, and as such they should be scattered—that's their way to make a "contribution," whatever they mean by this. Steiner said once that Jews creating a little independent state feel to him like an old man in a kindergarten. I share his feeling. I'm not at all in love with the adolescent toys of nationhood—waving flags and so on. I could even share Steiner's or Chomsky's or whoever's vision of a world in which there are perhaps one hundred civilizations, not single nation-states. But I do not want and I do not accept the role of being the eternal pioneer of the next phase of world history. As long as everyone else has locks on his doors and bars on his windows and machine guns and tanks and airplanes, I'm going to play the bloody game according to the bloody rules. The vision of the Jews as eternal pioneers of a multinational or nonnational or postnationalistic world is something which I think I cannot afford, not after Auschwitz. I'd be delighted to be the third one in the neighborhood or the fifth one in the world to join such an arrangement and abolish nation-states altogether. But I'm not going to remain the eternal pioneer of the next phase of world history. We Jews have played this role for very long. Some have admired us for this, some persecuted us. Nobody followed. Hence my Zionism, A to Z, in a nutshell.

Goodheart: What does Israel have to do to make the Arabs or the Palestinians accept this fact? Let's say Israel gives up the West Bank and Palestinian self-rule is established there. Would that

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satisfy Arabs living in Israel itself? Wouldn't they want separation and another partitioning?

Oz: The first thing Israel has to do—you might be surprised to hear this from an Israeli dove—the first thing is that Israel must be very strong, militarily and otherwise. In order to convince even the most militant Arabs that the dream of destroying Israel, or that Israel is an episode which can be transferred elsewhere, is unrealistic. Israel has to make a generous proposal which will no doubt be rejected by the Palestinians right now. As for the Arabs in the Galilee, the Arabs in Israel itself, the Palestinian citizens of the state of Israel, they will have a free choice—if you want I can call it a Jewish choice— between making *aliyah*, emigrating into their own independent country when this materializes, or living in the diaspora, or assimilating in Israel and becoming Israelis, not necessarily Jews but Israelis. That is a fair option. So far there has been a firm and consistent rejection by the Palestinians of any such proposals from Israeli moderates and doves. While in America four or five months ago, I had many chances to talk about the Israeli Peace Now movement, of which I'm an activist. I had to do a painful job of explaining to those nice, progressive, left-wing, dovish Americans that there is a basic and fundamental difference between the antiwar movement in America in the late sixties and early seventies on the one hand, and the Peace Now movement in Israel now. While the American movement maintained, if I read it correctly, that America was fighting the wrong war against the wrong enemy and must pull out immediately at any cost, there is no such claim within the Israeli Peace Now movement. No one of us maintains that this is a wrong war or that the enemy is not real, there is no question of pulling out and certainly no position of "at any cost."

Goodheart: I suppose the upcoming elections* will not make any significant political difference. The Palestinians have not accepted any of the proposals of the moderates and there is no immediate prospect of their doing so.

Oz: The elections might make a significant political difference within Israel. They would not have immediate impact on Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One of my most painful and bitter disappointments in my political experience has to do with my meetings with Palestinian intellectuals, writers, thinkers, political activists. Some of those people talk sense when they talk to me over coffee or over a glass of whiskey. The very same people,

*They took place in May 1981; though the Labor party was expected to win, Begin was returned to power.

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when they go out to talk to their own people in Arabic, repeat the most extremist, uncompromising slogans of the PLO. There is no Palestinian equivalent to the Israeli Peace Now movement.

Goodheart: Is it because they can't take the risk of saying in public what they tell you in private?

Oz: Well I guess they are terrorized, but this is no excuse for intellectuals, and I'm deeply and bitterly disappointed with those so-called reasonable Palestinians who do talk sense in private conversations, or even when they're interviewed by the *New York Times*. They do hint or suggest that they will accept the idea of partition, accept the existence of Israel under certain terms and are ready to negotiate. The same people, when they talk Arabic to their own people are just as extremist as Arafat. And to me the only thing that matters is what those people say in Arabic and in public. I don't give a damn for what they say to me in private conversations.

Goodheart: What difference do you think the upcoming elections will make?

Oz: I'm not sure about it, but I think a new government will return to the traditional and historical main road of Zionism—with deep respect for reality.

Goodheart: Which you don't think the present government has.

Oz: No. I think the present government puts stress in the wrong place. They are obsessed with the history, with the biblical past, with historical rights, which I respect, and I can even agree to their concept of the historical rights of the Jews over every inch of Palestine, but they lack the respect for reality, they lack the traditional Zionist wisdom of appreciating correctly what is the balance of power and what can be done and what cannot be done.

Goodheart: On the other hand, Shimon Peres (leader of the Labor party) is regarded as an opportunist, a man for all seasons, someone who has such an overwhelming respect for reality that the sense of principle is not very strong in him. I'm used to the mediocrity in American politics, but I'm surprised when journalists seem to say the same thing about Israeli politics. And when you think of Israel as an heroic society, there's a sense of puzzlement about how this could be.

Goodheart: Well look, I'm not terribly eager to discuss Peres personally in this particular interview, but in general the Labor party does represent a pragmatic, cautious, patient tradition. It's perhaps a conflict between two kinds of romanticism, because obviously Labor Zionists or moderation Zionists are in their own way romantics. But the difference between the Labor party and the present government is a difference between a mature, sober,

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calculating, patient romanticism on the one hand and adolescent romanticism on the other.

Goodheart: You might not care to discuss Peres, but are you prepared to discuss Moshe Dayan?

Oz: I dislike Dayan immensely, and this is an understatement. To me he represents a frightening obsession with death—it has to do with the way he uses language. I made, more than just once, a careful linguistic analysis of his speeches: his rhetoric is soaked in death. He's a very strange character, to me a very frightening character.

Goodheart: And then again he seems to have a certain feeling for Arabs and for the Arab reality, and there are suggestions that if there's a way out for Israel in relation to the Palestinians, Dayan has the way.

Oz: Yes, there's a certain aspect of Dayan's personality which could turn him into an interesting poet. He has imagination. But I happen to dislike the idea of poets in power.

Goodheart: That's why you've stayed away from politics? I met a man in Eilat (a resort town on the Red Sea) who lives in Ramot Meir, a village of fifty families near Tel Aviv. He said that there are only two people in that village who are not in debt. One is a Yeshivnik who lives off handouts from the government and American Jews. The Yeshivnik avoids work and military obligations by spending a minimal amount of time in the synagogue in the most perfunctory fashion. The other is himself. He regards himself and the Yeshivnik as parasites. He said he would like to work, but he can't afford to be in business. He lost his shirt in business, because of inflation.* So he plays the stock market. He excoriated the religious movement in Israel as the bane of Israel's existence because he says it has destroyed the work ethic. He connected the parasitism of the religious movements with the inflation and the sense of moral crisis in Israel. Is there anything in what he says?

Oz: Well, I think one of the worst results of the religious party's role in the Likud's coalition is the fact that it has undermined the basic principle of the Labor Zionist movement, namely, the attempt to change the entire system of values of the most petit bourgeois middle-class people in the world. This has been an evolutionary process, a painful one, a terrible one. Rabbinical students, lawyers, intellectuals, world reformers, were educating themselves into becoming workers, farmers, pioneers—the entire process is being seriously interrupted by the policies of the present

*Over 100 percent a year.

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government. I think one of the more successful slogans of the Labor party is "back to work." Whether they are really going to change the economy, change the system of priorities, change the national mood in these directions is still to be seen—I don't know, I don't know. I don't entirely trust the present leadership of the Labor party, but I wish to hope.

Goodheart: I'd like to ask you a few questions about yourself and your writing. In *My Michael*, the father of Michael is proud of him for having gone to the university to receive an education, whereas Michael's contemporaries dropped out of school to join kibbutzim. You seem to have had the best of both worlds. You have a university education and have become a writer and you also decided to live on a kibbutz. You haven't experienced the need to make the choice. Why do you continue to live on a kibbutz? Does it nourish you as a writer?

Oz: That takes a long answer and I hope you don't mind a long answer. I left home when I was fifteen: the October Revolution of my own life. I became fed up with the scholarly middle-class petit bourgeois atmosphere at home. I really decided to turn a new leaf in my life. It was a house full of books. My parents were middle-class city dwellers, moderate right-wingers, Jewish intelligentsia from eastern Europe. My father wanted me to become the archetype of the new Israeli: simple, blond, cleansed of Jewish neurosis, tough, gentile-looking. My parents even managed, somehow, to beget me blond (my parents were both dark). So they wanted me right off to become the opposite of what they were. They might have even secretly adopted an anti-Semitic cliché about complicated Jews with sweaty hands and divided feelings. I was meant to be a new leaf altogether: a sabra, tough, simple, unambivalent. My father, who knew seventeen languages, insisted on teaching me one and only one language: Hebrew. He didn't really want me to know any foreign languages because he certainly feared that if I had languages I'd suddenly go away one day. On the other hand of course, he wanted me to be well educated, to go to university, perhaps even to write books. Some cross between Nimrod the hunter and the saintly Rabbi from Bratzlaw, which is of course a monstrous image. I wanted to rebel against all this. They were city dwellers, so I became a socialist and a kibbutznik. They were intellectuals, so I became a menial worker here. I found after several years that my escape, I guess like all escapes, must have been a full circle. Here am I, doing exactly what my parents wanted me to do. The kibbutz is a fascinating world. I'm intrigued by those old pioneers who decided to change themselves

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and change their world in one generation. I'm being, of course, to a certain degree, ironical about this. And yet I find life on the kibbutz stimulating. The other thing is that, having lived here for twenty-five years now, I have an intimate acquaintance of about 400 people. It's a small community, it's a small village. But I know those 400 people very well indeed, I have seen genetics at work, I know the gossip, I know the stories behind their facades. If I had lived in Tel Aviv or in Jerusalem or, for that matter, in New York City, I would never have come to know such a range of people. I would have been probably surrounded by other writers, intellectuals, scholars, artists, sitting and rating one another.

Goodheart: Writers often bite the hand that feeds them. Isn't there a kind of inhibition about telling the stories of 400 intimate acquaintances?

Oz: Well, in the first place, the price I'm made to pay for this is that those people know about me a little more than I'd like them to know about me—but that's only fair, and I'm consciously willing to pay this price. Biting the hand—not really. I've never been interested in, so to speak, direct photography. I'm much more interested in photosynthesis, so to speak, than in photography.

Goodheart: Do you conceive of the Israeli writer as having a special role in Israeli society? In America, a writer can afford to indulge himself and he frequently does. Solzhenitsyn speaks of the Soviet writer who is true to himself as a state within the state. As a dissident he has an enormous social responsibility. What are an Israeli writer's responsibilities and freedoms?

Oz: Yes, there is a basic Slavonic tradition in Hebrew literature. I guess that's what is needed in true literature. The writer is regarded by many as the heir of the prophet, the one who could tell people what's going to happen and what they should do. I think there is no way of talking about "being the Israeli writer": I think the literary scene in this country is one of the most fascinating ones in the world—not necessarily one of the best ones, but one of the most fascinating ones. Processes and developments which occurred in European literatures over centuries took place in Hebrew within decades. At the right time of the day in Tel Aviv, at least until a few years ago, you will see the John Donne of Hebrew poetry and the Allen Ginsburg of Hebrew poetry and the Lord Byron of Hebrew poetry, all of them still alive and kicking hard, on speaking terms or rather on screaming terms. Just about every literary tradition in the world: archaic nineteenth-century, prerevolutionary Russian, mystic Polish traditions, German expressionism, French experimentalism.

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Goodheart: I read your work in translation so that I can only sense the power of the Hebrew, which is eloquent through the translation. I would think that one particular problem of a Hebrew writer is that he is writing in a language that is at once very old and very new. You have the anxiety of influence and then you have the sense of infinite possibilities. Can you give me some sense of what happens when you write?

Oz: Modern Hebrew is a wonderful language for poetry, extremely difficult for prose, and almost impossible for drama. It's a strange combination: half of it is solid rock, biblical, postbiblical, mislaid medieval Hebrew, part of it moving, sensuous, colloquial, which is changing very quickly, with every new wave of immigration. I guess I could tell you that, in some ways, modern Hebrew is somewhat like Elizabethan English. Our language is not yet petrified and solidified, and one is still in a position to legislate within the language. I'm not suggesting that each one of us is a William Shakespeare, but that temptation is there. Yes, you can take liberties with Modern Hebrew. By comparison, the only European language which I know to a certain degree—English—is really not at all such a lady of easy virtue. Unless you happen to be a mad Irishman and take all the liberties in the world with English. But Hebrew really encourages such practices, you can still form the language.

Goodheart: Is an academic impulse developing? I mean, are there academics who are saying: we're going too far, this is eccentric?

Oz: Of course, of course, of course. The puritans and the conservatives, the revolutionaries within the language, all of those are at work, and the struggle over the character and over the degree of permissiveness in Hebrew is vehement.

Goodheart: Nobody has yet proposed establishing an Academy?

Oz: There is an Academy, the Academy for the Hebrew Language. It has been around for decades, but to a certain extent it is irrelevant. It can't really form the language. Language is created and recreated all the time by immigrants, by people who learn it the hard way and enrich it, really by foreign syntaxes, foreign traditions, foreign structures. Biblical Hebrew, for example, never had a present tense.

Goodheart: Never had a present tense?

Oz: Never, everything was either past or future, which perhaps is philosophically right . . . makes perfect sense. Modern Hebrew has a present tense, but it is still a very weak tense, and this deep difference of the system of tenses implies a different process of time, consequently, perhaps a different sense of reality.

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Goodheart: Who are the writers whom you read and who matter to you?

Oz: My direct literary parents would probably mean very little to you, except for Agnon, who is known outside Israel. But I would say that, without knowing Russian—I don't know any Russian—I owe more to the nineteenth-century Russian literature than to Western literatures.

Goodheart: Dostoevsky, Tolstoy . . .

Oz: Tolstoy, above all Chekhov.

Goodheart: There's a strong Gothic element in your work which sometimes makes me think of Dostoevsky. What are you writing now?

Oz: I'm working on a novel. I've been working on it for two and a half or three years. I'm very far from the end and I'm very reluctant to discuss it.

The elections that took place in June did not have the outcome anticipated in March 1981. The campaign was characterized by a bitter division within Israeli Jewry between Eastern European Ashkenazim and North African Sephardim, a division that has not been common knowledge in America. The bitterness of the division was in evidence in the burning of Labor party headquarters (symbol of Ashkenazi power in Israel) by Sephardic supporters of Begin during the election campaign. Should there be peace between Jew and Arab, the drama to which Oz says Israelis are addicted could be displaced to the conflict between East European Askhenazim and North African Sephardim.

No Israeli writer can be detached from the fate of his country. So when General Tal speaks of Oz's distance from politics he means only a career in politics. Oz is passionately engaged with the politics of Israel. If one scrutinizes Oz's rhetoric in the interview as Oz had scrutinized Dayan's, one is struck by a militancy of expression that makes this dove sound like a hawk. But no dove in Israel can avoid sounding on occasion like a hawk. Unlike the reader of American newspapers, the dove knows where the borders of his country are and the threats that are posed on either side of them. Until Arab and Jew can recognize each other's reality, the dove can only vaguely hope for peace. In a crisis he stands with the hawk in defense of his country.

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Mordechai Gazit

AMERICA AND ISRAEL

In recent years, as political theorists have been talking about the affinity between certain nation states, the almost hackneyed term "special relationship" has been inserted into the language of political scientists. That there exists a "special relationship" between the United States and Israel has long been widely accepted. And the limits of that unique relationship, inherent in the basic disproportion in size between the two countries, will one day be examined fully. For a special relationship between a superpower like the United States and a small state like Israel seems incongruous. Is one not tempted to assume that the giant partner is bound to behave somewhat condescendingly and patronizingly, if not high-handedly, toward the small partner?

In reality, in the three decades of close relations, the United States has almost invariably displayed friendliness and understanding towards Israel. If Israel has not yet become relaxed in its attitude toward the United States, it is not due to a lack of American courtesy or good manners, but to the grave disappointments Israel has encountered at critical junctures in its history.

There is an unusual amount of reluctance to remember the painful episodes in relationships in which both sides have very high stakes. We all want to forgive and forget, yet the rude memories of the events have not faded away.

To begin with, during the War of Independence in 1948, the United States did not send any forces to the seriously endangered new state, although five regular Arab armies had invaded it, nor did the Americans take any other meaningful steps. There is also the sad memory of the United States strictly adhering to an arms embargo at a time when Britain, America's closest ally, continued to supply the Arabs with the arms they needed. Looking back thirty years later, American indifference to the fate of the Jewish community in Palestine, then totalling 600,000, seems unbelievable, especially when we recall that American passivity could not have been based on intelligence estimates that the poorly armed Jewish militias would

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provide a match for the Arab armies. On the contrary, U.S. predictions for Israel's chances of survival were gloomy.

The arms embargo, perceived in Israel as an abandonment by its greatest friend, had a formative effect on Israeli thinking that is probably more enduring than the effects of later U.S. policies concerning Israel.

Many years later, in the early seventies, when American positions toward Israel had changed considerably, Joseph Alsop, exasperated with Israeli suspicions, traumas, and lack of faith in the United States, accused Prime Minister Golda Meir of having a "Massada complex." Had he attacked merely her preoccupation with Israel's security problems, Mrs. Meir might have objected less. But the talk about a "complex," as if Israel had imagined such great difficulties as its solitude in 1948, caused Mrs. Meir to react impatiently. The most important lessons that Israel had learned were never to take security risks, never to trust international guarantees, and to evaluate without illusion the intentions of even friends and allies. The events which had resulted in Israel's dilemma all belonged to the recent past and should have been, Mrs. Meir felt, common knowledge.

De Gaulle's volte-face in 1967, coming just a few years after he had toasted France's friendship and alliance with Israel, is a good example of why Israel looks critically at friends and allies. Israel had been completely convinced that France would be a rock of firmness and dependability for years and years to come. But because of France's fickleness, most Israelis believe that what happened in Paris could happen anywhere, even in Washington. Many Israelis feel that the American record concerning Israel, though one of the most impressive in the annals of friendship between nations, is nevertheless imperfect.

President Truman's 1948 arms embargo was only one anti-Israeli decision made by this "staunch" friend of the new state. A day after he had reluctantly received Dr. Chaim Weizmann, president of the World Zionist Organization, the U.S delegation to the United Nations not only proposed a temporary suspension of the partition plan, that is, the idea of a Jewish state, but also took the initiative in proposing a Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly, to meet in April 1948, to consider a U.N. trusteeship for Palestine. Even if Truman was taken by surprise by the timing of that announcement, which came only a day after he had reassured Dr. Weizmann about American intentions, he himself had authorized the trusteeship proposal. He had made no mention to Dr. Weizmann that such an initiative was being prepared, and he did not call it off after it was

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tabled. Trygue Lie, the U.N. Secretary-General at the time, seriously considered resigning as a result. In his memoirs, Lie notes that the American turnabout on partition has never been explained, and he wonders whether the United States had been surprised by stronger Arab opposition and less British cooperation than expected. He adds that the United States might have feared that support for partition would have had adverse effects upon the oil concession held by American interests in Arab territory.

From the Israeli standpoint, even the most charitable explanation for Truman's policy—that when he took the trusteeship decision he acted in what he conceived to be the best interests of Israel—is hardly satisfactory. If the performance of the Israelis on the battlefield, made possible by the purchase of arms in Czechoslovakia and not in the United States, had been any less brilliant, the Special Session of the U.N. would probably have seriously considered the Truman administration's proposal. In his autobiography Abba Eban tells us how Truman, "having Dr. Weizmann on his conscience," conveyed through devious channels a message to the Israelis. "If the General Assembly session could be surmounted without reversing partition, and if a Jewish state was declared on its own responsibility, the president would recognize it immediately." Eban reflects: "Here was a President of the United States willing to recognize a Jewish state if it was established in defiance of the trusteeship proposal that his own State Department was seeking to press on the U.N." Apparently it did not occur to Truman on this occasion that the buck stopped on his desk.

Even Truman's de facto recognition of the state of Israel immediately after the proclamation of its independence on May 14, 1948, has to be seen in its proper perspective. U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall had warned Moshe Sharett several days before the event to consider whether to declare Israel's independence at all. His words were ringing in Sharett's ears: "If you make that decision, you will be alone. If you succeed, I will wish you well. But I warn you not to accept military advice too easily." In the light of subsequent events, these were somber words that had a demoralizing effect where encouragement was sorely needed.

Enough has been written in memoirs and confirmed by official documents for us to wonder whether Truman was a convinced proponent of recognition. The impression one gathers is that he took his decision somewhat less than wholeheartedly.

Also, at that time Israel was strongly supported by the Soviet Union. The USSR had announced that it would grant Israel a full de jure, and not, as Truman had done, a mere de facto recognition,

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as soon as that country came into being. It was hardly conceivable that the United States would let itself be beaten by the USSR in this contest. Although Truman was fed up with "Zionist pressures," his weariness was not enough reason to refuse recognition to a state whose creation had been decided upon by a two-thirds majority of the U.N., and whose efforts to overcome Arab military opposition to its establishment were sympathetically followed by the U.N. Secretary-General himself. And nothing in the U.S. doctrine of international jurisprudence militated against recognition.

Governments often lack historical perspective in their decision-making processes. But if the Truman administration had failed to grasp that a declaration of independence by the Jews returning to the land of their forefathers after two thousand years of exile and the Nazi holocaust was an epoch-making event, it would have committed an error of colossal proportions.

Another incident that must have made Israeli leaders keenly aware that an American president, even one considered friendly, will always put the protection of national interests before anything else was the El-Arish incident of December 1948. The Israeli army was finally strong enough to uproot the invading Egyptian army from the Negev and drive it into the Sinai, across the old international boundary. Soon some Israeli units reached the outskirts of El-Arish. U.S. reaction came swiftly. The United States was asked by Britain to convey to Israel what amounted to a British ultimatum—namely, that Britain would invoke its obligation under the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936 and come to Egypt's assistance, thereby getting involved in the fighting, if Israel did not withdraw. It is interesting to note that Egypt had not invoked the treaty and probably would not have invoked it at all.

Egypt was hoping to get rid of the British presence on Egyptian soil, which was anchored in the 1936 treaty. The Egyptian reluctance was probably viewed by Washington as an added factor in favor of supporting the British move. If the British, who were responsible for the defense of the Suez canal, a strategic Western asset of great value, felt that they could prove their friendship to the Egyptians by volunteering to enter the war on their side, how could the United States not go along? Consequently, the United States strongly supported the British demand that Israel withdraw its troops from El-Arish at once, if the war was not to spread and if Israel did not desire a reconsideration of American policies toward it. The most bewildering aspect of this incident is the alacrity with which the United States backed the British threat of waging war on Israel.

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The American attitude toward Israel in the fifties gave rise to much concern. Secretary of State Dulles declared in 1955 that it was regrettable that in the Arab-Israeli conflict even territory that was barren had acquired a sentimental significance. No one misunderstood him. He was obviously alluding not to Arab attachment to their vast deserts, but to Israel's Negev. He was aware that President Nasser was demanding that Israel cede portions of the Negev to create territorial continuity between Egypt and Jordan. The Americans began to examine the possiblity of an Israeli concession to enable the creation of that uninterrupted link.

The almost studied indifference of the United States to Israel's very grave security problems became obvious when, despite intensive Israeli efforts in 1954 and 1955, the Eisenhower administration refused to enter into any kind of defense agreement with Israel. Throughout that first decade, the United States was unfailingly restrained in the making of public statements about an American resolve to aid Israel in the event of an attack. This was at a time when the United States had defense treaties with countries all over the globe. It was deliberate policy that Israel was included in nothing more specific than a vague American commitment to the territorial integrity and political independence of "all states" in the Middle East. This, of course, caused much foreboding and disappointment in Israel.

The arms issue was, if anything, more serious. After the large-scale Egyptian arms deal with the Eastern bloc in 1955, Israel had asked the U.S. government in vain (at the Dulles-Sharett meeting in Geneva) to consent to the sale of arms to redress the military imbalance between itself and Egypt. It took, however, a year of frustrating efforts in Washington before the administration came up with the ingenious idea that the arms would come, not from American, but from Canadian and French arsenals. Abba Eban, then Israeli ambassador to the United States, notes: "From my point of view, this was better than nothing at all, but I could well understand the resentment in Paris and Ottawa which bred a spontaneous resistance to Dulles's importunities. I also thought that there was something rather childish in the exercise." As expected, the Canadian government stipulated that the United States let it be known publicly that its decision to authorize the sales was made with American approval. This condition was not put to the test because in the meantime Paris had come through. The French responded positively to the Israeli request because of their Algerian dilemma, not because of any American encouragement. Eban sums up his

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feeling about the Israeli attitude: "This was the only period in which America could be justly accused of having let Israel alone to the winds and storms."

Taking another very tense, perhaps even dangerous, moment for Israel in 1950, we find the same kind of puzzling American indifference. A week after the beginning of the Sinai campaign, and as complete victory had been secured, the Soviet Union warned Israel that it was "at this moment taking steps to put an end to the war and restrain its aggressors." Israel's allies in the fighting, Britain and France, had been given American assurances that a Soviet attack on them would lead to an American response, and that Israel had, the United States recognized, "just grievances" against Egypt. Nevertheless, Israel was not to be given any American assurances. On the contrary, the United States added its own pressure to the Soviet threat. Israel was told by Washington that if it did not comply, serious measures would be taken, such as the termination of all U.S. governmental and private aid, and the failure of the United States to object to U.N. sanctions against Israel, or to its eventual expulsion from the U.N. By a most unfortunate coincidence the American warning to Israel was issued on the same day the Soviets delivered theirs.

Yet even during the most difficult phases of the American-Israeli relationship, some Israelis never faltered in their belief that hidden behind its cold exterior was a warmhearted America that could be trusted. Frequently, they have been partly or wholly vindicated. The net psychological effect of the persistent American cold-shouldering was, nevertheless, to keep the earlier traumatic memories alive in Israel. It is now almost forgotten, but for many years the Israeli prime minister was, apparently, considered too problematic a personage to be officially invited to Washington. In 1960, Ben Gurion had to ask Brandeis University to invite him to the States, so that a visit to the White House and a talk with Eisenhower would be made to appear impromptu. This curious exercise was carried out in accordance with the U.S. administration's wish not to upset the Arabs. A year later, when Ben Gurion was anxious to meet with Kennedy, he accepted a Canadian invitation to come to Ottawa, so as to stop en route in New York. There, at the Waldorf Astoria, he met with Kennedy, who had not invited him to the White House.

Israeli disappointments with U.S. policy continued in the sixties. While the Kennedy administration established a valuable

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precedent with its decision to authorize the sale of the Hawk missile system to Israel, its intensive, though short lived, wooing of Nasser disturbed Israeli leaders deeply. Ben Gurion, in particular, was deeply upset by a Kennedy plan to settle the Arab refugee problem, in which Israel was expected to take back a considerable number of refugees. American speeches and votes in the Security Council were often a cause of Israeli resentment. It was then still unimaginable that the United States would use its veto power to protect Israel from concerted Soviet-Arab assaults. The Nixon administration dealt Israel a severe blow when, in December 1969, Secretary of State Rogers declared that Israel would have to withdraw completely from the Sinai and almost completely from the West Bank. To the Israelis, as Kissinger's memoirs tell us, it was of very little significance that President Nixon did not completely support his secretary. More weight was given to the fact that for almost a year the United States had been engaging in negotiations with the Soviets in an attempt to come up with a final settlement between Israel and the Arab countries. These talks were deeply resented in Jerusalem and were a matter of constant worry. Occasional breaks in communication that occurred in this period added to the suspicion, as, for example, when working papers which clearly concerned Israel were not shown to Israeli leaders.

Even Israel's relationship with Henry Kissinger, on the whole close and fruitful, had its stormy moments. His efforts on behalf of the encircled Egyptian Third Army, at the end of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, were viewed in Jerusalem as a display of excessive zeal to please Israel's enemies. When in the spring of 1975 he blamed Israel for the failure of his March mediation shuttle, the Rabin government and the Israeli public in general not only felt that his accusation was unjustified, but that it could cause long-term damage to Israel's position in American public opinion. In this case, as in earlier ones, the question of whether or not Israel's reaction was exaggerated is essentially immaterial. What mattered was the intensity of feeling aroused. The conviction that Israel is alone, and that even its best friend cannot be trusted too far, remained as strong as ever in Israel.

The huge airlift mounted by the United States to resupply Israel during the Yom Kippur War, the long and impressive history of American generosity toward Israel, and the many instances in which the United States was alone in its support of the Jewish state in the international arena constitute the other side of the balance

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sheet. If the United States sometimes took positions that Israel resented, it also advanced proposals that proved livable and practical, if not ideal.

In contrast to the restraint of the fifties and sixties, American presidential declarations have now become forthright and, often, extraordinarily friendly. When celebrating Israel's thirtieth anniversary at the White House on May 1, 1978, President Carter made the following statement: "For thirty years we have stood at the side of this proud and independent nation of Israel. I can say without reservation, as the President of the United States, that we will continue to do so not just for another thirty years, but forever."

The use of the word "forever" is unparalleled. Here a U.S. president commits his country to pursue a policy of special friendship with Israel in perpetuity. President Carter's statement must be taken seriously. It is evidence that relations between Israel and the United States have undergone a transformation that President Reagan will probably not question. Indeed, the recent signature of a memorandum on strategic cooperation between the two countries is an important good omen. However, while the climate of the relations has indeed radically changed, the cautions and constraints inherent in international relations have not been thrown to the wind.

A simple guiding principle explains American behavior: as long as a problem concerns only the United States and Israel, the American approach will be influenced by the desire to be helpful and friendly. However, where it is part of a wider context, be it strategic (oil, military bases) or trilateral (the United States, Israel, and the Arab countries), the United States will be considerably less forthcoming toward Israel and may even adopt policies of the kind mentioned earlier. Small wonder if Israel, reacting to such decisions, continues to be deeply troubled. Fears that are always close to the surface will be revived. The healing effect that time has had on the Israeli collective psyche will be greatly weakened if this happens. Despite the solid achievements, there may come a serious setback in U.S.-Israeli relations.

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John Patrick Diggins

WHERE DOES AUTHORITY COME FROM

Authority demands our respect; it also arouses our suspicion, leaving us wondering whether it is really a vital social imperative or merely an impossible pretension. Every writer who expounds an idea of authority thinks it reasonable and requisite. Those less confident may feel that the main purpose of intellectual history is to reveal its futility, to display writers in the past struggling with an issue whose resolution eluded their grasp.

When considering present writers, it may also be necessary to see how easy answers collapse into harder questions. For today, American intellectuals are arguing for the restoration of authority in a country that has no traditional authority to restore. The argument would have amused Walter Lippmann, who once defined modern liberalism as the overthrow of authority and the endless search for its substitute, a quest he wisely abandoned. Yet many contemporary writers seem convinced that authority can be reconstituted simply because society cannot exist without it. The idea of authority is thus legitimated by the necessity of authority itself, as though its truth were an absolute precondition of the possibility of organized and coherent existence. This conviction, as we shall see, is implicit in the post-Marxist functionalist assumptions of contemporary social science—one is tempted to call it "Parson's wager."

In recent years several books and statements have appeared addressing the causes of our present "national malaise." Among them were Robert Bellah's "Human Condition for a Good Society," Daniel Bell's *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, and Christopher Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism*. The anxiety permeating these documents seemed to confirm that legitimate authority had eroded in America—the "crisis of confidence" announced by former President Carter. Bell has explored the fate of the Protestant work ethic under the impact of cultural modernism; Bellah has tried to establish the basis for American "civil religion"; and Lasch has focused on the loss of patriarchal authority and its implications for the future of the modern family.

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Social unrest, war, and revolution have inspired many of the great political texts—Locke's *Second Treatise*, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Burke's *Reflections*, Lincoln's *Second Inaugural*, Lenin's *State and Revolution*, Randolph Bourne's *The State*. Today we confront neither the apocalyptic climaxes of 1914 or 1939, nor the dramas of St. Petersburg 1917 or Berlin 1933, but rather a creeping malaise under which the older creeds and values that had buoyed previous generations of Americans are crumbling. What accounts for our doubts and fears? It might be the disillusionment following a series of shocking events: a debilitating war in Vietnam, the Watergate scandals and other revelations of national corruption, new fears about America's dependency on foreign oil and the exhaustion of our own resources, rage about the captivity of American hostages in Iran, an uncontrollable arms race, and rampant inflation. These frustrations doubtless provoke many Americans to look for some sort of authority. And the deeper frustration may arise from the absence of a viable authority: a political figure to inspire a worried people; a movement or party to organize their interests and concerns; above all, an idea to illuminate the complex problems besetting the country. Our crisis of authority derives from our lack of any commanding idea of authority.

Or perhaps the "crisis of authority" is only a means of criticizing the alleged excesses of freedom. Today, the state is no longer being attacked in the name of "the people." On the contrary, the people are being attacked in the name of "the public interest" for their alleged outbursts of "democratic distemper." When the thinkers of the Enlightenment assaulted unjust government, they did so believing they were stating eternal, objective principles and "self-evident" truths that gave man "inalienable" rights—grounded in the laws of nature and God. Today, scholars criticizing the behavior of people allegedly abusing their collective power and authority no longer claim to believe in an objective truth, anchored in external reality and thus capable of discovery by the rational mind. The modern idea of truth is sociological and psychological, less an entity than a function or relation. Truth is made rather than discovered, made from the subjective meanings that people give to their actions. Truth is now seen as contingent upon men's behavior, rather than based on objective laws or values influencing their minds and thereby governing their behavior. This functionalist approach characterizes the stance of some contemporary American social scientists, who, while avoiding the "structural functionalism" of the late Talcott

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Parsons, draw upon the theoretical "systems" of Weber and Freud. Whether they offer the Protestant ethic to help us overcome hedonism or the Oedipal instinct to help us overcome narcissism, both look to social psychology for answers that at one time had been found in moral philosophy.

For Weber, the incentive to obey derives not only from an inner spiritual justification but from fear of divine wrath and hope for eternal salvation; for Freud, authority derives from the superego's identification with the father as a means of overcoming the libidinous desires for the mother. For both, authority exists only so long as people believe that it does by virtue of their not questioning long-standing convictions and taboos rooted in the sacred and the supernatural. But Weber and Freud recognized that belief in authority could very well give way to the "disenchantment of the world" as modern science erodes the "illusions" on which it rested. The problem confronting contemporary social science is how to reintroduce ideas whose disappearance is itself part of the crisis of authority—the idea of God and the reality of guilt. Can the intellectual endow the illusions of belief with a content that would make possible once again the belief in illusions?

In the Weberian and Freudian schemes, the rationality of authority depends upon man's ceasing to ask authority to be reasonable. Whether we are dependent upon the inscrutability of God's will or upon the arbitrariness of the father's power, we have no choice but to accept their authority. The term "evil" has been changed, not the threat, for the difficulties of sanity remain as perilous as those of salvation, and in Freud and Weber man is not safely endowed with the rational faculties to assure him of either. Freud's hostility to religion and Weber's existential agnosticism did not entirely free them to conceive authority as secular. Authority still has a bad origin in that it continues to trail the legacy of "sin," whether manifested as the human desire for erotic pleasure or that for material happiness. Different though their methods were, Freud and Weber arrived at the same conclusion: authority results not from realizing desires but from disciplining them.

Yet ultimately Freud and Weber propose not so much authority as power, the promise of future gratification in return for deferring immediate urges in order to realize desires through a life of relentless striving. As Henry Adams observed almost a century ago, to follow the Oedipal solution and identify with the authority of the father was to identify with power and domination and to forsake those

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redeeming "feminine" qualities which offer the only alternatives to a "masculine" world of force and conquest. Everyman's "sin," lamented Adams in "A Prayer to the Virgin," originated in the abandonment of the "majesty of grace and love" of the mother in order "to claim the father's empire for my own." In identifying solely with the father, man merely reveals the power drive within himself that culminates in the worship of "the Dynamo." In both Freud and Weber, the cunning of expediency gives power a logical priority over moral authority. Freud's superego adapts conveniently to whatever is, and Weber's "rational-legal" authority simply illuminates how man submits to forces legitimated by the very act of submission. Both Freudianism and Weberianism promise the overcoming of alienation through identification with power and reconciliation to the "reality principle."

Whether or not all authority is legitimized force, as Weber insisted, or is founded in the instinctual values of lust and aggression, as Freud contended, it is removed from the human realm of truth, reason, and freedom. Both schemes juxtapose the determinism of history and nature to the disorders of modern culture in order to ground authority in a realm beyond rational control, and even the appearance of individual "charismatic authority," the spark of freedom and spontaneity that may momentarily shatter the "iron cage" of bureaucratic institutions, occurs independently of people's collective will.

Inevitably the quarrel with authority is, as Dostoevsky and Melville demonstrated, the quarrel with God and nature. God did not ask man whether he would accept the torment of sin in order better to overcome it; nature did not consult man about the wisdom of a permanent Oedipal implant. If the irony of history turns man's spiritual *angst* into productive effort and sublimates his lusts and vices into sources of social order, what part is played by man's own motives, purposes, choices, and why should he submit to that which he has not willed? Are there not other reasons for accepting authority, reasons that derive from the preference for freedom rather than from the presumption of necessity? In the eighteenth century, man's voluntary allegiance to authority was a confirmation of his "liberty" and "virtue." Give me liberty or give me Durkheim.

Emile Durkheim, the patron saint of modern sociology, believed that society itself constitutes a "sacred" universe of rites and rituals through which man unconsciously affirms his need for moral community. But the idea that culture requires religion may be an

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idea whose time has passed. In a symposium on "Religion and the Intellectuals" that ran in *PR* in 1950, most American writers—James Agee being the emphatic exception—answered "no" to the question: "Assuming that in the past religions nourished certain vital human values, can these values be maintained without a widespread belief in the supernatural?" The trouble with this formulation, as Hannah Arendt pointed out, is that "one cannot really escape the question of truth and therefore cannot treat the whole matter as though God had been the notion of some especially clever pragmatist who knew what it is good for." The suggestion that religion ought to be organized as "an institution only because one likes to have a culture" struck Arendt as "rather funny."

Robert Nisbet is one Durkheimian who would not agree. In *Twilight of Authority*, he laments the "erosion of the sacred in human affairs" and blames the murder of legitimate authority on "the intellectuals." Throughout history, intellectuals have been the handmaidens of authority, able to help legitimate any given political order or social system through argument and discourse. But what they helped make they may also destroy, and they may question the authority of existing institutions without being disloyal to their country and culture. Modern sociologists overlook Arendt's reminder that religion and authority cannot escape "the question of truth." The reluctance to resort to religion in order to endow society with spiritual significance and make politics itself redemptive cannot be blamed on the "cultural modernists" of our age, as Bell implies. The Camp David intellectuals who met with President Carter in 1979 may believe in the synthesis of religion and politics, but what Bell calls "the disjunction of the realms" cannot be traced to the nihilistic artists and writers of the twentieth century. Thomas Jefferson had more to do with it than did Jackson Pollock.

The Federalist authors, Hamilton and Madison, rejected religion as a means of social control because religious sects appeared no better than political factions in their common tendency to tyrannize over minorities. John Adams most somberly warned that traditional religion would prove incapable of disciplining power and sustaining virtue. "I have been long settled in my own opinion," Adams wrote to Jefferson, "that neither Philosophy, nor Religion, nor Morality, nor Wisdom, nor Interest, will ever govern nations or parties, against their Vanity, Pride, Resentment or Revenge, or their Avarice or Ambition. Nothing but Force and Power and Strength can restrain them." Adams also perceived that the "cultural

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contradictions" of capitalism grow from the logic of capitalist development—as the vices of wealth undermine the virtues of work—rather than from the mischief of modern intellectuals. "Will you tell me how to prevent riches from becoming the effects of temperance and industry?" Adams asked Jefferson. "Will you tell me how to prevent riches from producing luxury? Will you tell me how to prevent luxury from producing effeminacy, intoxication, extravagance, Vice and folly?"

Like John and Henry Adams, the late Hannah Arendt also despaired of the future of the American republic because she too knew that authority cannot live without truth. Authority is the tribute that reason pays to power, and as such it must constitute a judgment on the movement of power by virtue of standing apart from it. Today we are living in a society that lacks any collectively shared aims that might engender meaning and judgment and hence make genuine authority acceptable. We are also experiencing an intellectual impasse as we ponder why modern culture cannot bring forth a compelling moral and philosophical justification for the existence of authority. And we are living under a political system whose leaders demand respect (or reelection) but cannot give a convincing reason for it. The three dilemmas could be summed up as Henry Adams's nightmare: power without authority, knowledge without truth, society without spirit. All these dilemmas require a concept of truth. But the inability to exercise authority provides almost certain proof that the truths do not exist. There are no reasons for man either to command with conviction or to obey with devotion. In the absence of moral truth or objective value, authority remains unjustifiable, incapable of enjoying the verdict of reason when its power is felt. Richard Sennett's book *Authority* demonstrates the futility of trying to analyze the meaning of power without a concept of truth.

In Sennett's reading, authority expresses the "emotional bonds" of society. "The bond of authority is built of images of strength and weakness; it is the emotional expression of power." Traditionally, the political philosopher has used reason to translate power into legitimate authority, but Sennett aims at something quite different. He wants to show us how we experience authority and how it could be reconstituted so that we might experience it more justly and humanely. Sennett starts his case by asserting, with Freud and Weber, that authority must be understood as an emotional phenomenon. Freud and Weber did indeed believe that subjective

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experience is not answerable to objective ideas. Both understood authority as a relation of subordination to domination, whether that of the superego to an idealized parental image or that of a follower to the charismatic leader. Similarly, Sennett believes that "the conditions of power will largely determine what the subjects see and feel." We err in refusing to acknowledge that authority answers real needs in man's social nature. One need is legitimacy. "The most important general feature of Weber's approach is that he identifies authority with legitimacy. People will not obey, he believes, those they think are illegitimate. The consequence, to Weber, is that we can always tell when a sense of authority exists in a society; it is when people voluntarily obey their rulers."

Can we "always tell" when legitimate authority exists merely by observing deeds of voluntary obedience? Can we validly infer from an act of submission that those who submit know the basis on which they are acting? Even voluntary submission may not logically imply legitimacy if those who submit have not the faintest notion of what legitimate, rightful authority is or what it should be. Weber's analysis of legitimacy contributed much to social science, but it falters before the Nuremberg rallies and the Jonesville massacre.

"The dilemma of authority in our time," writes Sennett, "the peculiar fear it inspires, is that *we feel attracted to strong figures we do not believe to be legitimate.*" The identification of the weak with the strong is scarcely "the dilemma of authority in our time." This was true of tribal warrior cultures at the dawn of human history. Classical political philosophers from Machiavelli to Hobbes recognized that fear and insecurity create obedience to the symbols of force and strength. Why man consents to his own domination by others is a perplexing issue, but even if it involves man's voluntary subjugation to something other than power and coercion we would still be hard pressed to regard such behavior as legitimate. Marx, of course, termed it a species of "false consciousness," and Antonio Gramsci and Thorstein Veblen showed us that what appeared to be false was actually real insofar as the masses of men willingly submit to the "hegemonic" authority of the ruling class and "emulate" its values. The radical theorist wants man to cast off these emotional chains, but his sentimental preference does not constitute a philosophy based on principle. One might compare, for example, the contemporary social psychologist with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosopher on the issue of legitimate authority. Where the former sees the relation to authority as part of man's

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social nature, the latter looks to the laws of nature and God. Thus in its American version the doctrine of "natural rights" granted to man not only claims to property and liberty but the "duty" to preserve his freedom and not to alienate his rights. The dilemma of social philosophy in our time seems to have less to do with the obvious fact that people will flee from freedom into the arms of authority than with the less obvious fact that the modern intellectual cannot propose a reason why they should not. We suffer from too much sociology.

Thus Sennett treats authority as a constant process of interpreting power on the part of the subjects who experience it. "Authority . . . is itself inherently an act of imagination." Reducing authority to emotions and perceptions, he attempts to go beyond Freud and Weber and beyond the Frankfurt school by exploring the "missing dimension: the actual give and take between the strong and the weak." Sennett seeks the legitimation of authority through changes in the roles of those who exercise authority and those who acquiesce to it. Yet transforming the private relations of employees and workers, of parents and children, or of teachers and students, into mutually shared power and responsibility does little to establish the grounds for political authority based on objective standards of the public good. This concept of authority allows for a collectivity of interacting minds that answer to nothing beyond their own perceptions. Pushed to its logical conclusion, this concept would replace theory with therapy. Turning authority over to the people may enable them to enjoy the exercise of power, but it does not establish a relation to legitimate authority. For the traditional emphasis on commands and obligations, social psychology substitutes emotional self-fulfillment, ignoring Thomas Huxley's warning that "a man's worst difficulties begin when he is able to do as he likes."

The sociological interpretation of authority tends to become a subject without an object, providing us with an account of what we feel rather than an evaluation of what we know. It especially obscures the distinction between the experience of everyday power relations and knowledge and understanding of genuine authority. Insofar as social reality consists in private interactions, the locus of authority does not lie either in public institutions (government, law, etc.) that might engender obedience, or in ideas (virtue, justice, etc.) that might compel the mind's assent. To locate authority in the "imagination" is not so much to render it unreal as to remove it from

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the world of truth. No doubt the literary intellectual has good reason to defend the power of the creative mind. But the "sociological imagination" generally confines itself to the interaction of the self with others as the ultimate datum of experience and truth. We ask for a theory of authority and we are given a conception of human nature that cannot think about authority as an object of thought.

Sennett would have us reject forms of authority such as paternalism because they are characterized by "false love." Indeed, love seems to be Sennett's criterion of genuine authority. But he offers no explanation of true love, no criteria for recognizing it or for distinguishing it from false beliefs, and thus offers us no criterion for understanding and accepting proper expressions of authority. Jesus had authority, but so did Vince Lombardi, which suggests that sentiments of legitimacy may spring from hate as well as love. A reporter once asked a Greenbay Packer if his coach were a "racist." "No," replied the black lineman. "He hates us all."

Both Vince Lombardi and Niccolo Machiavelli knew the meaning of authority as the capacity not only to get one's views accepted but to have one's orders obeyed, and the coach might agree with the philosopher that "great men call it a disgrace to lose." In this respect authority derives from power and will, insofar as it is bestowed upon those who triumph over obstacles to emerge victorious, and those who triumph are not to trust man, unless such trust is based upon fear rather than love.

There are many dimensions to what J.G.A. Pocock has called "the Machiavellian Moment" in Western political thought, that turning point in intellectual history when an early form of scientific "realism" replaced traditional Christian moralism in the conduct of statecraft. The genius of Machiavelli's wisdom, as Isaiah Berlin has noted, lies not in his discovering the reality of power but in his recognizing as an "insoluble dilemma" that there are no real answers to basic problems and thus "those who wished to survive had to tolerate error." "This," Berlin observes, "is the dagger of which Meinecke speaks, with which Machiavelli inflicted the wound that has never healed." One casualty of Machiavelli's meditations on power and authority was truth, the idea that the ultimate nature of reality could be grasped in order to arrive at objectively valid solutions to problems of moral conduct; the second casualty was love, the idea that man has the moral potential for responding to demonstrated principles of goodness that may even go against his self-interests. Ever since Machiavelli purged Christian ethics from

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political thought the idea of love has seldom been invoked as the basis of authority, and what Machiavelli had discredited as a dangerous conceit Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche buried as sentimental nonsense. It is thus fitting that Sennett concludes his study with a sensitive discussion of the ambiguities of Dostoyevsky's "The Grand Inquisitor," in which "miracle, mystery, and authority" represent the chains which bind man to the illusion that he would like to be free but could not bear the burdens of freedom, and hence craves to submit himself to some superior power he could worship. But Dostoyevsky's famous parable may not offer the last word.

"Who has convinced whom?" asked Sennett of the Inquisitor's confrontation with Christ. "Has God's love triumphed over repression, or has the spokesman of the Devil finally made God face the facts?" Whatever the answer, we may better appreciate the difficulties of drawing upon the Christian idea of love to develop a social philosophy of authority by considering the writings of Henry Adams. Here we encounter love informing authority not so much as a system of commands but as a sensibility of compassion. Here we may also discover why love ought to inspire our obligations to obey authority but, with the impact of modernity, cannot.

Henry Adams could not turn to classical virtue, as did his ancestors, or to nature, as did the Transcendentalists, or to modern science, as did the Pragmatists, for an answer to the problem of authority. Nor could this anguished intellect follow Tocqueville to the opinions of society or Machiavelli to the artistry of politics and statecraft. "Society has no unity; one wandered about it like a maggot in cheese," observed Adams, and politics could be little more than "the systematic organization of hatreds." An admirer of Marx's sense of force and conflict in human affairs, he saw that corporate capitalism had escaped the checks and balances of the Constitution. The spectre that haunted him was the alienation of economic power from political authority, the tendency of power to become an independent force, severed from the very institutional restraints *The Federalist* had devised to prevent society's domination by "an alien will." Adams first sought in history an answer to the problem of alienation, but, unlike Marx, he did not find it. His nine-volume masterpiece on the Jefferson and Madison administrations led him to the conclusion that history remained impervious to truth, revealing only a succession of events brought about by force. Without the consolations of Hegel and the visions of Marx, Adams's

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sense of alienation could not be overcome through the study of history since history was itself the problem: the powerlessness of mind confronted by the mindlessness of power.

Adams turned to religion in *Mont Saint-Michel & Chartres*. This work, a classic in the history of medieval architecture and culture, has been relatively neglected by the social and political philosopher. Yet the work exemplifies the difficulties of constructing a philosophy of authority on the basis of religious beliefs that cannot be reconstructed. The *Chartres* narrative was a work of imagination, but it demonstrates that even an imaginative understanding of authority cannot survive what Walter Lippmann would call "the acids of modernity."

The cathedral at Chartres represented to Adams the finest flowering of Christianity, the triumph of faith and joy over fear and pain, expressed in the unity and harmony of geometrical design and structure. At the center stands the statue of the Virgin Mary, radiating the mystery of grace and love and expressing the authority of goodness against the power of the oppressor—"an authority which the people wanted, and the fiefs feared." But Mary hardly represents the classical image of authority: she is neither a law-giver, a voice of reason, an arbiter of justice, nor even a symbol of order. On the contrary, she is an intellectual embarrassment. She questioned a deity that would create man in order to punish him, and she offered to the masses not strict judgment but "protection, pardon, love." Adams esteemed this "illogical, unreasonable, and feminine" spirit. "Intensely human, but always Queen, she upset, at her pleasure, the decision of every court and the orders of every authority, human or divine; interfered directly in the ordeal; altered the processes of nature; abolished space; annihilated time." Mary emerges as an impulsive anarchist undermining all that is logical, abstract, impersonal, and objective. A saint, she subverts authority in order to express it better. In explaining his feelings to himself, Adams enables us to understand our feelings, and what we feel in the *Chartres* narrative is not order and unity, as traditional scholarship has it, but the freedom and spontaneity of charismatic authority.

The contemporary intellectual who aspires to reconcile religion, politics, and science will find little support in the writings of Henry Adams. For Adams could only save the spiritual idea of authority from politics and science, from the abuses of power and the negations of reason, by estheticizing authority itself, depicting the

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Virgin's authority as a form of "beauty" which "stares everyone in the eye and begs for sympathy." Adams made no attempt to reconcile his image of the Virgin with traditional Protestant notions of authority which drive man to obey for fear of being damned. Nor did he try to reconcile it with the reality of politics. We behold the Virgin, but her anarchistic energies cannot be translated into Christian ethics or her mystical imagery into political philosophy. Perhaps had Adams attempted to reconcile the spiritual and the political he would have had to sacrifice his ethic of love to develop a system of rules, and thus admit that genuine authority had become nothing more than the power of law to impose itself. Aquinas tried to make God rational; but Adams, perhaps sensing that rationality had become identical to the following of rules, made the Virgin irrational.

The quarrel between William James and Henry Adams illustrates this dilemma. Both the philosopher and the historian came to believe in the efficacy of religion as a source of hope, and thus the Virgin symbolized the thesis of James's philosophical argument in "The Will to Believe": an idea or image is valued by the results it produces in the subjects who believe in it and act upon it. Although Adams's idea of religion more implied a state of possession than of action, the Jamesian penchant for the practical consequences of a creed could be found in the most mystical of faiths, even in miracles. "Of all Mary's miracles," wrote Adams, "the best attested next to the preservation of the Church, is the building of it." Despite their agreement about the relation of believing and doing, they criticized the premises of each other's arguments. When James read a private 1904 copy of *Mont Saint-Michel & Chartres*, he could only compliment its refreshing "frolic quality" while chiding the pessimism and historical determinism that ran through all of Adams's other works. And when Adams read the 1902 edition of James's *Principles of Psychology*, he rejected the entire philosophy of freedom and salvation based on Jamesian pragmatism.

For Adams, who postulated a healthy will crippled by a sick mind, religious salvation lay beyond the reach of man. James held that the will and imagination can alter reality, but Adams never accepted that the content of faith could be voluntarily invoked. Unlike James's "belief," Adams's notion of "faith" could not be produced by the exercise of will alone since faith makes the activity of will possible. One cannot reason or will oneself from a state of belief to a state of faith, for while belief remains exposed to doubt,

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faith remains innocent of it. The modern mind, wracked with doubt, paralyzes the will because it cannot rest content that it has arrived at truth, particularly when it pauses, James-like, at a tentative belief that has no content other than the utility of the belief itself. Faith alone leaves man with no knowledge of his desire for more knowledge—that restless energy which occasions the progress of reason and the disillusion of mind.

Faith prepares man for authority by precluding his capacity to dispute it, and faith requires not so much courage and will as an absorbing sense of the sacred, divine, transcendent—those qualities which, as Robert Nisbet has observed, endow ideas and images with spiritual significance and thereby remove them from the sphere of pragmatic utility. Only faith could save the mind from destruction by its own energies.

Today those energies are expressed in science and capitalism, the two historical forces that have brought about the "disenchantment of the world." Those forces have made life a race between enlightenment and destruction, and have left the world, as Adams put it, "nervous, querulous, unreasonable, and afraid." How can this process of disintegration be reversed so that energy might be transformed into knowledge, force into law, and power into authority? Many contemporary social scientists believe that a case can be made for authority on the very pragmatic grounds that Adams resisted. Society needs "law and order"; therefore a firm sense of authority is useful to the survival of the social order. Whether contemporary authority is based on objective truths that command the mind's assent, or whether it is based on faiths that can withstand the assaults of reason, seems beside the point to intellectuals who blame the problem on other intellectuals. Adams would be a troublemaker to modern social scientists, for he represents a Catholic mind and an agnostic temperament. In *Writers and Politics* Conor Cruise O'Brien explains why:

> To intellectuals brought up in Catholic communities—whether they accept or not the teaching and standards of these communities—the truth or falsehood of a given proposition is far more important than its social implications. This does not mean there is not a great deal of dishonesty, both conscious and unconscious, among such intellectuals; there certainly is; but, whatever their personal difficulties, they will think of truth, not utility, as the essential criterion of all propositions.

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Adams faced the challenge of finding a philosophy of authority capable of coping with an industrial society intoxicated with the prospect of unlimited power. He came to reject modern religion as a source of authority for the same reason he had rejected modern politics: it may satisfy our needs but it could never answer to our demands for truth. The Virgin satisfied Adams's need to contemplate authority as the beauty of moral power, but she did not exist, and Adams knew it. When the mind knows the game the imagination plays, the game is up. But there is a politically consoling thought in *The Education of Henry Adams*. That great American "conservative Christian anarchist," as he described himself, remains an enemy of today's "neoconservatives" for much the same reason Trotsky was an enemy of Stalin: he knew too much.

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FICTION

Beatrice Tauss

POWER

Power. Today I had a taste of it. I've been exercising it. Wielding it. I hate the infamous thing. Let me explain.

When I walked in, the first grade class was silent and stiff, afraid. It is nearly Christmas and the regular teacher has never been absent. Could there be a substitute for God?

I knew what to do. My instructions were clear enough. The plan for the day was on the desk: 9:30—Penmanship. 10:00—Milk Break. 10:30—Singing. Things like that. And of course there would be the stage directions from the class delivered in teacher language: "No child must have more than two cookies." "Martin must pick up the children's papers." "You must put it on the board."

Thus the established world is kept intact; a sea wall. Outside it, chaos lay.

We began. We pledged allegiance to the flag and they sang in wavering high-pitched voices, "My Country, 'Tis of Thee." No bass, only a thin, high, floating, flat line of music. Michael came forward to hold the flag. It was his turn. He stood straight, his stubby fingers wrapped tensely around the small flagpole balanced on his navel. The heroic nature of his charge was reflected in his posture. There followed a simple prayer:

> Thank you for the food we eat.
> Thank you for the world so sweet.
> Thank you for the birds that sing.
> Thank you, God, for everything.

It was an old slum school on a crumbling side street bordering Chinatown. It was pinched, pinched and drab and mean. On sooty windows were pasted crooked colored-paper cutouts of Christmas trees and holly wreaths. The effect was melancholy. The walls inside were grayish green, dingy, peeling, decaying.

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"Thank you, God, for everything." The sweet, solemn sounds floated out of the high windows into the factories and machine shops. Inside, Michael put the flag away with great care; the class sat down with a clacking of seats. Michael, common clay now, allowed himself the privilege of sweeping Tony's pencil from the desk immediately in front of his own. The point broke. Tony was wild for revenge. I am an experienced substitute, you know, and I intervened quickly. Michael sharpened Tony's pencil, which gave Michael pleasure and Tony satisfaction. We set to work.

Penmanship. On each desk was Scotch taped a neatly printed card. LINDA. MARLENE. ELSIE. PEDRO. Every day they labor, fingers crushed against unwilling pencils, sweatily mastering that mysterious tangle of lines.

I walked among them in their trial, guiding a straggling pencil back to the line, tracing the intricacies of G for George, who was in trouble. How hard it is! In the front seat sat a pale, sickly girl unable to go beyond A. Angela. For her the mystery was dark and treacherous, not to be unraveled. She stopped, defeated, again and again. She ran to me, clutching her paper already ragged from clumsy erasures, black with smeared lead, to show the letter A, misshapen, flattened, wide of the line.

"Is it good?" Angela asked, pointing with smudgy fingers to her production. "Is it right?" She was flushed from her effort, feverish. Angela had far to go.

From the back there came a sudden crash. Sounds of scuffling and curses ripped the quiet air. Two boys were locked in single combat, pummeling wildly, thrashing about in the narrow aisle. I was knocked in the kidneys a couple of times before I could pry them loose. They were neighbors. One was in tears. Rage and exertion had puffed and blotched his face.

"He did it!" Pedro said. His face twisted in his struggle to hold back the tears, wanting to give way entirely. "I didn't do nothing. He knocked my plane down." He choked with righteous wrath. "It was here. He knocked it down. Like this." And the wounded boy swept the plane, already crushed, from his seat for all the world to see—and especially me—just how this offense had happened to him. Now the tears got out. "And he said something bad about my mother." Eyes and nose streamed freely. I soothed him. I offered him Kleenex and other comfort in his extremity. I tried to straighten the battered plane and promised him retribution. Out of the excited babble of the children clustered around to witness evil, there rose one clear feminine voice.

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"He's bad!" she said, with authority, silencing the chorus.

"He's bad!" she repeated, and the certainty rang and echoed in the dreary room. Beside a front seat, at the teacher's right hand, stood a small, beautiful child, a flower, arm outstretched with its dainty index finger pointing accusingly. Once more she repeated, "He's bad!" and her finger reached out like a lash across the room. Her pale blonde hair fell silkenly to her shoulders. Superb, she stood pointing, a quivering accusing angel, outraged, indignant.

"What is your name?"

Again that clear voice, that certainty.

"My name is Robin Sandra."

"Thank you, Robin. Let's all settle down now and continue writing. I'll take care of this matter."

"I'm the Princess," Robin offered.

"Are you?" I studied her large gray eyes, earnestly imploring due recognition, her delicately flared nostrils, her sweet bud of a mouth. She was perfect. She was haughty. She stood upright in full view—demanding, expecting, receiving praise.

"Yes, I'm the Princess and you must excuse me for the rehearsal when Peter comes to the door."

"I will remember." Robin stood another moment in triumph. She was dressed in an elaborately ruffled pink "party dress" that belled slightly above her sweetly dimpled knees. She wore patent leather shoes with the classic button and white stockings. Ah, you are a Princess and you have the royal interest in preserving the status quo. You teach me what's what in the present regime—and, above all, who's who.

She sat down at last, not entirely satisfied with her efforts to keep the world intact.

I turned to the silent offender. He did not protest. He did not deny. He had merely slunk down in his seat, an emaciated child with great big black eyes. He had twisted himself into a corner of his seat, with his knees thrust under him, drinking in the response to his deed. He shriveled up and withdrew, leaving only those fierce brilliant eyes to do battle with the outside world. We studied each other. Testing. Testing. I met his fierce gaze. Urgent need pushed him.

"What is your name?' We had already spoken intimately. Confusion and a little joy took him by surprise. The joy, rising, glowed in his eyes. He pointed a bony, nail-bitten finger to the card. DANIEL.

"Can you write it?"

He nodded. He untwisted his legs. He swung his skinny body into position. He shot me a look: was this a trap?

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I stood near his desk and watched him set down the letters of his name. Terror and wonder made him grip the stubby pencil till his knuckles were white. I touched his shoulder lightly. All at once his uncertainty passed into belief. The boy looked up at me, gaze softened. A miracle had befallen him. He accepted. He entered Canaan boldly. He bore down on the pencil and reproduced with intense joyful movements his full name. Then he lifted the paper and gave it to me, as though making a gift of himself.

"It's very well done."

The child was bursting with pride. Allied now, we undertook to make peace with the outer world.

"You must apologize to Pedro."

Daniel glanced quickly at his neighbor, who had passed these few, mortal minutes in ordinary ways. Pedro had wiped his tears, blown his nose, put his mangled plane on a corner of his desk within eyeshot, to keep the wound open. He had returned to his writing and was now pressing and grinding the pencil into the paper, producing black, severe lines that often went clear through the paper.

Daniel rummaged in his desk. Spitballs, broken pencils, Crayola stubs, a cold hard wad of bubble gum, two pebbles, and a Coca-Cola cap were rapidly scattered. He found at last his treasure.

"Here, Pedro." He leaned over the boy with a sudden rush of feeling. "I'll give you this," and he pressed upon Pedro a small red metal toy soldier. Love had made him generous.

"Here," he insisted, "it was in the Cracker Jacks."

The explanation carried great weight. Pedro accepted the soldier gravely. He understood it to be a just reward for all he had suffered.

"And I didn't *mean* it. I didn't *mean* it about your mother." Daniel was eager to wash away the sins of an earlier, darker period. He was a new man. Pedro, his anguish turned to sudden triumph, was pacified. Daniel had settled his old scores. He returned to his seat. He was ready to begin his new life.

Addition was very hard for them all. The regular teacher had left them a page of sums. There is a prize for the first correct paper, I was informed. A gold star is pasted near one's name on the bulletin board chart. The competition was fierce. Anxiety heated the room. They struggled in silence with 2 + 1 = , 3 + 3 = . Daniel crouched over his desk, a man possessed, cudgeling his brain, pushing the stub in haste to record his calculations. His need to win tensed and twisted his frail body. From my desk I prayed for him. There was a

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buzz and hum when Daniel won. Could such things be? We were all learning. The evidence was incontrovertible. It did not escape his fellows that Daniel flushed with joy as I pasted the star—his first—on the chart. He returned in triumph to his seat.

The old order reasserted itself. Peter came to the door. Robin Sandra was called. Though puzzled by the morning's events, she left for the rehearsal with the hauteur that became the Princess.

Free play. There is a tug at my skirt and I look down into the stricken face of Angela.

"Can I be the Princess too?" She is balancing on her left foot while the big toe of the other works around the left ankle and calf. She is punished for being skeletal and pallid, for having black wiry hair that stands straight up at points, for inhaling mucous loudly when she breathes, for having small, close-set eyes that give her the look of a hungry, fearful chipmunk.

Some answer is expected of the substitute. No Princess looks up at me with those anxious eyes. She waits for some word to change everything. She sniffles in a little snot and a droplet remains poised at the tip of her nose.

O, sister, born to be overlooked, can I help you avert your fate? Am I a maker of Princesses? Can I cause you to be golden and shimmering? Can I teach you to expect nothing—how to be passed by gracefully? Down with Princesses! Let there be no more. . . .

"Maybe next time you will be the Princess." The words stick in my throat. "But now, dear, what would you like to play?"

"I don't know," she says, and the right foot stops its agonized dance. Her eyes say: I have been rejected and humiliated. I have been left to yearn and long. Now I'm being lied to and false hopes are being unconvincingly raised. What do you want me to want? She retreats, sniffling up the last drop, into stupidity.

She sits and watches Joe and Myra playing husband and wife. Myra has fastened a bit of battered veil to her head. She slips her arm through his and, married, they slowly, solemnly circle the room. He is fair and soft, a domesticated animal. He allows himself to be paraded around and around. Myra, excited, never releases his arm. She is victorious. Joe is calm, contented.

George, stuffed with bananas and sweet cream and giant salami sandwiches, looks up from the garage he is building.

"Hey, Joe. Come on over here. What are you walking around with her for? She's so small."

"She'll grow," Joe says. Together they circle the grubby room.

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George's fat cheeks are puffed out in exasperation, even disgust. "Come on over here," he repeats. His little eyes roll around in disbelief. To leave the blocks for a—girl. He wipes out the garage. Soon he is laying the foundation of an airplane hangar.

Marlene and Ida play house with the cups and saucers. Peggy opens a small store with the cash register. Joe and Myra walk by as if alone in the room. Angela, *princesse manquée*, follows their slow circle with her eyes. Play period is over.

We line up in the dingy hall for the toilet break. They enter the facilities in small groups. Suddenly from the Boys' Room come cries and sounds of struggle. In panic, I hurry to separate the tangled knot of warriors, screaming and clawing at one another. Cheeks and shirts are spattered and dripping from tears and splashings. "He did it!" "He did it!" "He did it!" There is the immediate babble assigning blame. Accusations tumble out. Many frenzied fingers are pointing to a pale, blond, frail fellow, somewhat girlish, very wet, mussed, matted, and rumpled. I shoo them all into the corridor where they huddle, anxiously waiting for justice. The blond one, meek, not used to crime, approaches. I stand towering over him. From my five feet two inches, I feel like Gulliver looking far down below me at the pale creature hovering near my knees. I hear my voice—suddenly sterner and larger.

"Did you do it?" I am not even sure what *it* is. From the hubbub of accusation and finger pointing, half sentences and innuendoes, I gather they had been peeing in arcs and had got into a fight over whose was highest. He had hurled the first handful of water. Fists and splashes and general melee. Now he is exposed in all his weakness and guilt, like Adam, in the Garden, fearing the heavy wrath, answering God's summons, "Here am I." Helpless, he struggles with terror and truth. His lips and chin quiver. His soft face collapses with sobbing. Extravagantly large crystal tears plunk like marbles down the creases on his face. "Did you do it?"

"Yes, I did it," comes clearly through the sobs. The sweet release of confession. His moral struggle is over. He has fought the darkness. He has thrown himself on my mercy. And now that I have caught him, now that he is at bay, what shall I do with him? How can I make the punishment fit the crime?

He has no luck. Always timid and obedient, today, he too has slipped out from under the yoke. Always good, he has been deliriously bad. Just this once. He has gotten caught. He is prepared to pay for it.

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How the children love these scenes of accusation and trial. Transgression and retribution occupy them wholly. They cluster around, a silent, intense Greek chorus, waiting for the decree.

And what about that strictly forbidden splash in defense of his prowess? Could I say "bravo"? I want to gather him up and give him comfort. But I must pronounce his doom. Will he promise, here, before us all, never to do it again? Then, I give him another chance. This is power. I don't like the taste.

We reassembled and resumed the plan. Daniel approached and whispered in my ear. If he was good the rest of the day, could he be "the child who sits in the front"? Regular custom prescribed it; the children looked for it eagerly. For the last fifteen minutes the teacher would read the class a story. One child, the good child, was chosen to sit next to the teacher, in the front. Robin Sandra had certainly sat there many times. And Dan had hungered for this prize. How far out of his reach it must have seemed. But, today—

He contained himself for the rest of the dragging afternoon by main force. He trembled with hope and impatience. We could not know what fires of purification he passed through to make himself ready for his triumph. At last. He was conscious of the occasion. He advanced in solemn majesty holding himself erect and stiff. He did not hurry. He seemed to want them all to see and to make no mistake. He sat down at my right, before the bewildered eyes of his fellows. He held his hands clasped rigidly in his lap, his knees drawn up tight. He turned his great black eyes on the class, to see whether they all, all—including Angela who couldn't get beyond the letter A, and Pedro whose mother he had in leaner times insulted, and Elsie who never wanted to hold his hand during the line-up, and the fat boy in the back seat who never knew what to do, and the Princess Robin herself whose delicate forefinger had singled him out in a whiplash—he wanted to see whether all of them, the whole world, noticed that he, Dan, had been chosen. He sat down, licking honey.

I began to read from "Rumplestiltskin." In the silence of that grimy room, the baffled captive was again helped to perform a miracle. Against all expectation and common experience, straw was once more turned to gold.

I felt a tiny tug at my skirt. I leaned down and Dan whispered in my ear. Then he put his head in my lap.

There were hoots and cries of derision and laughter and sneering.

"Baby!" "Baby!"

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But Dan had passed now beyond the reach of the vulgar mob, beyond their disapproval. He had entered the realm of pure spirit. He closed his eyes. We were so close, I could feel his heart. He was smiling. His face shone. He was among the blessed.

When the reading was over, he arose gravely and passed among them to his seat. It was evident that he had returned from a far distance.

Then, immediately, it was time to go home. In a heavy Mackinaw, too big for him, and a plaid wool cap with huge earflaps nearly obliterating his face, he was all but unrecognizable. When they lined up, fastidious Elsie, who had openly spurned him, allowed him to take her hand as required.

They filed out. Some pressed my hand. Some kissed me. Dan touched my skirt for a moment, then marched on down the corridor to the main doors beyond which waited the mothers in the noisy factory street.

So many years to go, I thought, as he disappeared. I stood there, melancholy, trying to remember where the uptown subway was. Listen, I know that I can't do this job. Too much power. Too little. It's too hard.

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Carolyn Wells Kraus

RED ELEPHANTS

One mid-August I was sitting on a cement seawall overlooking the beach of Sochi, a Soviet resort town on the Black Sea where I had come for a break in my language studies in Moscow. The beach was a patchwork of blankets and towels, displaying fat Russian bureaucrats on their two-week vacations, soaking like slugs in the hazy sun.

But the clarity of this scene might be deceiving. I have been living among Russians for months now, trying to blend in, keeping my Levis and ballpoint pens back at my hotel. Yet, in spite of my growing facility with their language, I am not convinced that I understand anything about them. Which is why I stay. People appear and disappear without explanation, nothing in the shop windows is for sale, no one is behind the persistent ringing of my telephone. The Intourist Bureau makes elaborate preparations for guides to accompany me everywhere, but these guides rarely appear, and then only to vanish without a word. Either by design or by mistake, I am left alone. Windows are always mysteriously breaking and last night as I walked through an alley to hear the familiar shattering of glass, I ducked to avoid a flying dead cat.

Just as I am surrendering to paranoia, I suspect that there is no design at all, that this is simply an earthy chaos, like a Breughel painting, with the same lumpy peasants swilling down vodka with black bread stuck in their noses ("It keeps you from passing out"), then grunting through steamy sex in the next hotel room.

A month ago I hitchhiked south into "off limits" Uzbek villages near Tashkent where the inhabitants indulged me like a pet, howled at my misunderstandings ("Are you married?" "With pleasure, thank you.") But whenever I reached for my camera, they scurried to make household repairs and changed from colorful peasant prints to their best factory-made drab. When I returned to my tourist approved hotel in Tashkent, no one seemed to know I had been gone, although as I walked through the hall to my room, someone came running out of it, disappearing down a back stairway. Later I was not sure I had seen this.

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Today as I sit above the crowded beach, something definite is starting to happen. An elephant is moving along the pavement in my direction. Since an elephant here is as unlikely as it would be on a large city street anywhere, a crowd is growing around it. A neat line of red scarves, the Young Pioneers, had passed by earlier, advancing on the "Palace of Culture"—a converted church across from the beach. Spotting the elephant now, they break ranks and dart into the crowd. A beggar, officially nonexistent yet nodding on a bench near me, lifts his crumpled-bag face toward the crowd, rises, and sleepwalks into it. There are gypsies, beggars, children, bathers, and an elephant here. A model Soviet city has suddenly disintegrated. From a third-story balcony of a stucco high-rise, a woman hurls insults against the gathering confusion, her little body puffed up into a perfect square, while below, people still wind toward the elephant, through the knot of buses and tiny Volga cars stopped in the street.

A chorus of voices filters through my mind, organizing itself into something like a chant. The word is *smert*—death. But as usual, I do not trust my ears, so I study the elephant. Now I see that rusty ropes of blood are oozing down one of its sides from a wound behind one ear which its leader keeps poking with a sharp pole. But the elephant's movements remain unvaried, hypnotic: the neck chains shift in their bleached groove, the foot waits as the chains swing out of the way, and as the pole moves toward the wound the elephant's foot moves forward again as if the pole were part of its own machinery. In this way the Oriental-eyed keeper is moving the elephant across town and out of the way. It occurs to me that the old animal with its splintered tusks and crumpled skin, its eyes buried under layers of folds, must be dying. When it sags to the pavement in the town's main intersection, the pole is withdrawn and the elephant is doused with water so that it will move more easily through the heat.

There is something else about this elephant. Vague uneasiness has been settling in me for more than a week. Public offices have been closed, mail deliveries are nonexistent, flights out have been cancelled by an official pronouncement of bad weather, despite the blue sky and warm air. The elephant is part of this unfolding drama that seems to have moved no one but me—ships anchoring offshore and not unloading, planes arriving empty, closings of the Georgian and Ukrainian borders on either side of Sochi. Last week I found a notice buried on the back page of *Pravda*: "Three unusual deaths in Astrakhan, possibly cholera." Another day's edition mentioned a

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case of cholera in Odessa, a Black Sea town northwest of Sochi, before there was a blackout of further information.

Three days later when I went to collect my visa and catch my scheduled flight back to Moscow, an Intourist secretary explained that a thunderstorm at the airport two miles away had grounded all planes until further notice. As I walked back to my hotel under brilliant sunshine, I resolved to try again on the next day. The same secretary snapped that August was not tourist season and no planes were in operation. The following day there was something about "irregularities" in my passport. Finally there was a lock on the door.

My questions about epidemics receive blank stares or smiles. People shake their heads.

I spend all my time in the open, staring at boats which rock like mirages and never move closer to the seawall where I am sitting as the elephant moves across the intersection towards me. Finding an open space near the elephant, some children join hands to form a human whip, while those farther away climb on backs to watch as the pole goes in and the blood oozes, then splats to the pavement.

Almost clear of the intersection, the elephant begins to drop again. This time the keeper shoves the prod up into the open wound and the elephant rises with it, continuing on until the scene has dissolved into waves of heat, leaving only the dried blood mingled with debris.

I lean back, relaxing my shoulders against the wall, and watch the people drift back to their benches and beach towels. The beggar has disappeared with the elephant, and I wonder if those really were gypsies. According to official literature, gypsies have long since been employed and assimilated into Soviet society. Among the bland faces exposed on the beach are no signs of panic or even of recognition, although earlier as I entered a beach-side café I caught a phrase, "What if an epidemic?" and the quick response, "Not in the twentieth century."

I agree. Cholera epidemics do not occur in the twentieth century in prosperous resort towns. But here a blue sky looks down on planes grounded due to bad weather, and an elephant has just walked by.

I want to escape into one of the dog-eared books in my suitcase, so I leave the beach and walk back to my hotel, passing by a lemonade machine where people drink as casually as ever from one shared plastic cup. Back in my room, I pick up the *Collected Short Stories of Thomas Mann* and shuffle pages to locate a passage in *Death in Venice*

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which is vaguely on my mind: "[the plague] brought terror to Astrakhan, terror to Moscow. . . ." The lines echo and unveil the casual obituaries in *Pravda*.

Drawn to public places and the solidarity of crowds, I walk through a packed amusement park and into a theatre advertising a new Russian production of *Crime and Punishment*. Raskolnikov leaves the old woman's body and runs along a river. His heartbeat is a bass drum in the background: the Russian touch. I am struck by how melodramatic the film would seem to any Westerner and yet how well it evokes the mood of my own experience in this country.

I stand in all lines—to be a Russian is to stand in lines—often without knowing where they lead: lottery tickets, cotton underwear, a fresh crop of apples, the bitter wormy green ones that are so popular here. There are never signs of anger or fading endurance in lines, only a periodic sigh from the bottom of the lungs which seems to come from no individual.

One line turns out to be for circus tickets, so I buy one and float with the crowd into bleachers surrounding a single ring. The Russian circus. Bears lope into the ring wearing tennis shoes. Studying their hourglass bodies, I mistake the line of white fur on their chests for zippers. Suddenly they are waltzing, skating, doing impossibly graceful gymnastics, their heads swaying dreamily from side to side. White poodles ride in on a miniature railroad car and hop off with suitcases in their mouths which open to produce more dogs and more dogs, like nested *matrioshka* dolls.

Ten Kazak horsemen, all teeth, form a human pyramid on the back of one Arabian pony, then flip off one by one, landing in headstands on horses that gallop by. Now the arena is illuminated only by their ten Cheshire Cat grins floating in circles. The clowns, "Petrovsky and Sons," slam tennis balls back and forth with shoes on their hands and racquets strapped to their feet until a rush of ozone signals the spotlight to a steel globe which is suspended from the ceiling. Two sturdy blondes in bathing suits zoom blindfolded on motorcycles and, as their paths cross, miss each other by inches. Fluorescent astronauts dive into space and catch each other beneath a plastic moon.

A lady rides in on an elephant.

The elephant sways into the spotlight, his white tusks gleaming against shiny grey hide. It is a scene set in slow motion. The lady performer smooths back platinum curls and strikes a seductive pose in her pink sequined sheath. When she points a stick to the floor, the

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elephant kneels and heaves himself into a headstand. His legs wave in the spotlight like giant hydras. When she lies down, he rolls over her, rises onto his hind legs, and circles the ring in waltz time. The gentle rhythm of his movements lends grace to his body in spite of its size, yet I once read that elephant training is a brutal business. A trainer must hurt it so much that the elephant comes to fear him and never forgets how cruel he can be. He beats the elephant until it lies down on one side and heaves an enormous sigh—the trainer's sign that he can begin.

It is hard to believe in such a past, as the elephant waits, meditatively, for the circus crew to fasten a cable between two weighted poles. He raises his head to a drum roll, lifts one foot to test the tightrope, and steadies himself upon it, selecting from the jumble of legs the one which will draw him forward to where the lady performer flashes a sequined smile.

When the act is over, she swings onto the elephant's back and rides him to the bleachers on each side of the ring to receive the applause. As he moves toward my seat, a familiar picture is reemerging: dingy, splintered tusks show through where white polish has begun to chip off. The skin is loose and folded. Eyes which have disappeared beneath hundreds of wrinkles are recreated with black lines. And as the elephant's hide rolls back on one side, just behind the ear a vague mass of scabs shows through grey paint.

Next morning I find that the Intourist office has reopened. The same secretary hands over my passport with no comment, and a guide hurries me to the airport. Back in Moscow my mail includes a clipping from the *New York Times*: an epidemic threatening Turkish and Southern Soviet lands around the Black Sea has been checked. I walk through wide streets to Red Square where early morning lines are beginning to stretch out of sight from Lenin's mausoleum. Pilgrims will wait for hours to pause above a small body with a domed forehead and a pointed moustache which appears to be a Madame Tussaud wax replica, before they are driven out by armed guards. The two tall sentries at the exit do not seem to blink their eyes. Beyond Lenin's tomb, the candy-striped domes of Saint Basil's cathedral rise above crowds moving across the square. I am again unsure whether I am constantly watched or totally ignored—or which I would prefer.

Five years later, I watch the Soviets prepare for the Summer Olympics. Moscow's embarrassing images have been swept from

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sight: tourists are driven down streets emptied of beggars, drunks, shabby buildings. No dead cats here. Children between seven and twelve have been sent to pioneer camps to preserve them from contact with the Western visitors. Dissident elements have been hidden away in prisons and insane asylums. Meanwhile, the open wounds of Afghanistan are being painted over, the invasion packaged for domestic consumption as a defensive foreign policy maneuver. More important to the Soviet leaders, the cleanup covers the city with an unrippled surface reflecting back only the sparkle of gold and silver from Soviet athletic victories.

The main streets of Moscow swell with automobiles diverted off side roads by barricades. Gorki Prospect empties Moscow's visitors into Red Square where they are hustled to the front of lines stretching for a mile and given a tour that reflects the priorities of the most carefully rehearsed Olympics in history. There is the obligatory viewing of Lenin's body in its moisture- and temperature-controlled glass case. Then on to the biggest cannon ever built (too heavy to move, it was never fired), and the biggest bell ever cast (cracking from its own weight before it could be rung). Both these anomalies were built by Tzars but faithfully reflect obsessions that survived the revolution that deposed them.

In the middle of Red Square, tourists view freshly painted Saint Basil's Cathedral. Their photographs capture its Disneyland exterior, but never the dark, empty space inside.

The Soviet Union rises into our conscious minds when a famous dissident is disposed of, or when an invasion or threatened invasion against some wandering satellite seems to move us all closer to apocalypse. At these times we wonder: do the Russian people know the truth behind their government's circus antics? Have the tactics of mind control of this bureaucratic totalitarian state turned the Russian bear into something less formidable and less worthy of our anguish? Olympic visitors reported that the Russian public seemed to accept, even welcome the eyewash that disturbed its Western guests. But then the circus is such a national rite that this should hardly surprise us. Simply one more performance of the painted elephant.

During the purge years of the thirties and forties, parents prepared their children for life by teaching them not to ask too many questions. The parents repeated the litanies of survival until they themselves began to believe. "My children love Lenin most of all and me only second." "In his whole life, Stalin has never been wrong

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once." Why should parents tell their children of their own suffering, of relatives who disappeared in the night? They might let something slip at school. Why condemn them to death? "So the children grew," wrote Nadezhda Mandelstam in her memoirs of those years, "swelling the ranks of the hypnotized."

These children and their children are now the Russian people. If someone else disappears, it is none of your business. If your country launches an invasion, well, it has its reasons. During my travels in the Soviet Union in the seventies, I found no one who held discriminating opinions about current leaders, even flattering ones. Kosygin was thought to be slightly more liberal than Brezhnev, but neither of these men existed as individuals. This instinctual apathy is an enabling condition of people working, raising children, leading their lives.

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Matti Megged

BECKETT AND GIACOMETTI

In one of the rare cases in which he discussed his art, Beckett said: "To be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail, that failure is his world and to shrink from it is desertion, art and craft, good housekeeping, living. . . . I know that all that is required now . . . is to make of this submission, this admission, this fidelity to failure, a new term of relation, and of the act which, unable to act, obliged to act, he makes an expressive act, even if only of itself, of its impossibility, of its obligation " (from "Three Dialogues with George Duthuit in *Transition*, 1949). And in the same dialogue he speaks of "the expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express."

Albert Giacometti wrote in 1961: "I find it harder and harder to finish my things. The older I get, the lonelier I am. . . . Yet, even if everything I've made up to now doesn't count at all . . . and in spite of my certainty that I've failed up to now, and experienced that everything I start runs between my fingers, I have more desire than ever to work. . . . I don't understand it, but that's how it is. I see my sculptures before me: each one . . . a failure. Right, a failure! But in each is something of what I want to create some day. . . . But the sculpture I'm thinking of contains everything that makes only a scattered and fragmentary appearance in the other sculptures. That gives me a desire . . . to continue my work." And again the following year: "Basically, I am only working for the sake of the experience that I feel when working. . . . Success or failure is unimportant. I work only because it is impossible for me to do something else."

Comparing Beckett's words with those of Giacometti, one finds that the tone is different; the philosophy—if there is such—is different, and the attitude toward one's work, goal, and achievements is different. Yet there is an affinity between them. Both Beckett and Giacometti shared the permanent, consistent feeling of failure and the need, or the mania, to continue doing the only thing to which they were devoted, namely, creating.

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But what is the meaning of what both Beckett and Giacometti called "failure"? In what sense—if at all—did they fail?

Both Beckett and Giacometti began their careers by basing their work on the convention that there is an accepted and adequate correlation between art and external reality. But for both of them this phase was very brief. For different reasons, dependent mainly on the different media they used, both Beckett and Giacometti ceased after a short while to believe in the possibility of representing, or even the sense of trying to represent, reality by means of art. Giacometti apparently reached this conclusion not as a result of any specific philosophy or esthetic theory, but simply because he was preoccupied with problems of perspective and perception. Already as a young man, we are told, he attempted to follow his father's advice, or demand, to paint pears "as they were," but he soon discovered that for him "as they were" meant as *he* saw them. This was probably his first clash with the esthetic convention that the known reality of objects is the same as their perceived reality. Following the several stages of Giacometti's development, we discover that this antagonism preoccupied his mind and work until his last days, although the conclusions he drew from it, both theoretically and practically, passed through many changes. The problem that preoccupied him from the beginning was not only that of perspective and perception, but also that of the relation between details and wholeness, or between the totality of the perception of reality and its relation to the imaginary frame of space in which he could express his perception.

As early as 1931, Giacometti had found one of the solutions to this problem. In his sculpture *The Cage*, the box around the forms serves as a platform and setting for the visual models. The space represented there heightens the drama played within its narrow confines. There is no doubt, of course, that *The Cage*, like many other sculptures of this period (a good example is *A Palace at 4 A.M.*), was created under the direct influence of the surrealists, but I think that these sculptures are an early indication of the crucial concept of the later Giacometti concerning the role of the stage in his art. This concept is one of the main links that connect Giacometti and Beckett. Both reached the conclusion, intentionally or otherwise, that the way (or at least one of the ways) to reach the goal of creating a "totality of life" by means of art is by creating first the imaginary space wherein this totality can exist as an independent and self-sufficient reality—a reality that would not attempt to represent the

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"objective" world, nor to be an allegory of this world, but would have its own life and "objectivity." This reality would be created by the artist's imagination only, an individual theater which on the surface bears no resemblance to the "objective" world, yet may be conceived as a metaphor of it, a new myth.

Giacometti's *Model for a Square* (1932) appears to anticipate an artistic ideal that the artist expressed in his own words much later: "Every moment of the day people come together and drift apart, and approach each other again to try to make contact anew. They unceasingly form and reform living compositions of incredible complexity. What I want to express in everything I do is the totality of this life." (The same idea is expressed in Beckett's story "The Lost Ones.") But the totality of this life cannot be reached by static sculptures, nor by the attempt to shape it as "reflection" or "representation" of "objective reality."

Another Giacometti sculpture from this period, *No More Play* (1932), might also be considered as a preparation or anticipation for a stage set. In this case, it might have been a set for one of Beckett's plays. Here again, the conception of the objects is surrealistic; but the relations between the immobile figure of the woman on one side, and the figure of the man, raising his hands in a gesture of submission, on the other side, and the relations between the figures and the whole stage—in the middle of which we see graves and open coffins—are appropriate for the concept of art as a theater stage. To be more accurate, the play we see, or might see, on this stage is already finished. There is "no more play," except the play of death. This very play is enacted many times on Beckett's stage in such plays as *Endgame*, *Happy Days*, and *Play*, or described by him in such stories as "Lessness" and "The Lost Ones," and in his novels.

Giacometti himself was not pleased with the solutions he found during his surrealistic period. I believe that the main reason for this dissatisfaction was his feeling that by using the surrealistic symbols he was neglecting what he considered to be the main concern of the artist, the living subject itself. As he himself said, he wanted to put himself to the test of drawing from a model again, to work eye to eye with reality, letting the consequences be what they may. In other words, he started (or probably never ceased) to ask himself if the closed world of surrealistic symbols might really and honestly serve his goal of creating the "totality of life." In a way, he was searching for the impossible: to bestow on the work of art its independence, according to the inherent laws of perception realized through art,

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and yet to maintain its relation to the concrete presence of objective forms. How can the artist bridge this gap? How can he try to express his relation to reality without losing the mystery and wonder of art, and how can he devote himself to the unique perception and imaginary world of art without losing touch with the real life that moved him and left such an impact on his memory and experience as an artist?

Giacometti attempted to resolve this paradox in purely technical terms by concentrating on the image of the human head, stressing that part of the "objective" body that visually alludes to the imaginary world created by the artist while getting rid of all other physical details.

Beckett, too, reached the same conclusion—although he never spoke of it in these terms—about the head as the focus and space for this totality of life. He first expressed his concern with the head in one of his earliest works, *Murphy* (1938), where Murphy himself (especially in Chapter 6) talks about his mind as a huge, empty ball, hermetically closed from the world outside and containing the whole "real" world within. In his later works, Beckett emphasizes the centricity of the head by more plastic means. The Unnameable is stuck in a jar, and only his head emerges. In *Happy Days*, Winny is thrust into a mound of sand, and in the second act we see only her head. In *Play*, the three figures, one man and two women, are again stuck in big jars and only their heads are seen.

While preoccupied with images of the head, Giacometti often complained about the "thick veil" lying between him and the reality of the model. He explained it as the result of seeing only the uncountable details of the head instead of seeing it as a whole. "In order to see the head as a whole, I had to place the model farther and farther away. The farther away she was, the smaller her head became." This may sound like a technical problem or, if we wish, a problem connected with the "phenomenology of perception," which Sartre wrote about in his article on Giacometti, but the veil that disturbed Giacometti—indeed, until his last day—was not only a veil created by distance and perception. It was the veil that isolates the world of art from reality.

The only resolution to this problem Giacometti found was to express metaphorically the distance of the soul from reality. He achieved this by creating figures that evoke a living reality, a presence, while releasing them from the confines of material resemblance to "real" figures. In other words, the reality is achieved

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by stripping from the figures more and more of the appearance of "real" substance—making them tiny, almost two-dimensional, standing on an unreal pedestal (base, chariot, wheels), stressing and enlarging only one essential part of the body—yet, at the same time, endowing them with some gesture, some trait, that renders a metaphor rather than a mirror of reality.

In his own way, Beckett did the same in his novels and, even more so, in his plays: the more "naked" his characters became, the more stripped of the external traits of daily life, possessions, clothes, behavior, the more they revealed the essential elements of the human condition: loneliness, the fear of loneliness, the need to communicate, the cry for help, the confrontation with decay and death. In Beckett's story "Ping," a naked white body is described as standing upright inside a white box; only the blueness of the eyes disturbs the total whiteness: "Nose, ears white holes; mouth white scam like sewn invisible; legs joined like sewn." Giacometti's *Imprisoned Statuette* (1950) bears a striking resemblance to this in essence if not in details.

Another Beckett story, "Lessness," evokes images reminiscent of those in two of Giacometti's works, *Moon-Happening* and *The Cage*. Beckett writes:

> Figment light never but grey air timeless no sound. Blank planes touch close sheer white all gone from mind. Little body ash grey locked rigid heart beating face to endless. . . . Four square true refuge long last four walls over backwards no sound. . . . Legs a single block arms fast to sides little body face to endless. . . . Only upright little body grey smooth no relief a few holes. . . . He will live again the space of a step it will be day and night again over him the endlessness.

Giacometti believed that "style does not conform to the reality of appearances, and yet the heads that come closest to resembling people are those that are the least naturalistic—the sculptures of the Egyptians, the Chinese, the archaic Greeks." Style for Giacometti involved rendering his figures devoid of mass, weight, and material presence. On the other hand, these figures gain their presence by marking the limits of the space they encompass. Here we return again to the concept of stage and theater: the figures created by Giacometti and Beckett are not "real," certainly not naturalistic. They live in an imaginary space deliberately created by the artist in order to affect us by the distance between it and our reality.

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In the last phase of his work, from 1952 to 1965, Giacometti was less interested in the relation between the work of art and the observer (be it the artist himself), and tended more to seek the "absolute resemblance to reality—to that which *is*—and not to appearance." This was a priori an impossible task. Imaginary space is valid only for the work of art itself. Giacometti's solution was a new goal: to create a "double of reality" in *real* space, a sculpture in a city square peopled by living men and women. He knew, as he said about his portrait of Yammihara, that "nothing is more like Yammihara . . . than Yammihara himself." Here Giacometti admits that the goal of making a work of art identical with reality leads only to paradox: the artist can make progress only by omitting everything that seems to belong to the realm of art ("style") and not to reality, by destroying more and more. His own words, "now I create only by destroying," sound like Beckett's "heroes": they inevitably reach the realization that the only way to express themselves authentically is to be silent, but Beckett's "heroes" continue to talk—and Giacometti went on working.

The solution that Giacometti found, or believed he found, was to deny the polarity between art and reality. "When I'm working," he wrote, "I never think about expressing myself. I say to myself: copy that cup. This cup, that's enough. And, in the end, of course, it's *my* cup." Nevertheless, he continues, "If I were ever able to render a head as it really is, that would mean I could grasp hold of reality—I would be omniscient. Then life would cease." This, of course, is just a way of changing roles between art and reality and admitting that they cannot exist together. His works from this peroid are not less "esthetic forms," less stylized than those of the earlier periods. On the contrary, especially in his drawings—including those that pretend to be "only reality"—we can see how the lines, rather than representing objective reality, avoid individual forms. These are implied only in those places *not* touched by his brush or pencil. In a different way, this is true of the sculptures too: their lifelike quality is achieved *not* by imitating the naturalistic details, but by creating the conditions for their appearance. In other words—and as a contradiction to his own declaration—Giacometti was able to "grasp hold of reality" by leaving reality outside his work and only implying its presence. The same might be said about some of Beckett's last works, especially "Lessness" and "The Lost Ones," or plays like *Krapp's Last Tape*; *Embers*; *Cascando*; *Eh, Joe*; and *Not I*. The "objective reality" creeps in through the holes of silence. One can only *imagine* the corporeality of Giacometti's heads, or of Beckett's "heroes": the

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works as we see them—or, in Beckett's case, sometimes only hear them—almost negate the material existence of their subjects. They are present and evocative through and by their silence or their absence. This is especially apparent when we regard the means both Beckett and Giacometti used to deal with the presence of remembered events, sights, and figures.

Beckett could evoke these memories only by negating them, by emphasizing the impossibility of remembering. The negation became the gate to reviving memory. The same is true about Giacometti who, especially in his last years, emphasized the importance of his early memories, but those memories are present, again, by their absence. An example is Giacometti's story about the girls he saw in Padua, when he was twenty years old, and their implied presence in several of his latest compositions of groups of girls.

I do not wish, or do not dare, to overemphasize the resemblance between Beckett and Giacometti. Suffice it to say that both of them struggled with similar problems and difficulties, though in different ways. Both realized that in the final account there is *no* solution to the problem of the relation between reality and art and that, even so, the only obligation of the artist is to go on, never to give up his search for a way to bridge the gap, to achieve the impossible.

It was not a mere accident that Giacometti was the artist who designed the setting for Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* at the Odeon in 1953. Beckett certainly could not have chosen a more suitable artist to do the job. The set was composed of a lonely tree on an empty flat stage and a moon, and Giacometti remembered how he and Beckett experimented all night long with where to put the tree, and whether to make it bigger or smaller, and it never seemed right to them.

We may imagine how these two artists argued about the tree and the moon without finding a satisfactory solution, and probably ended the night with the words, or the thought: and the rest is silence.

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Jerome Klinkowitz

JOHN BARTH RECONSIDERED

If American critics were to follow the practice of their Spanish and Latin American colleagues, John Barth and certain of his contemporaries would be called "the Generation of '31." Give or take a few years on either side of that date, one can list the birthdates of a constellation of fiction writers who for lack of a better word have been consistently called "new": John Barth (1930), Donald Barthelme (1931), Ronald Sukenick and Robert Coover (1932), and Jerzy Kosinski (1933), to name the most commercially prominent. Just a few years older are Raymond Federman, John Hawkes, and William H. Gass; and a few years younger are Thomas Pynchon, Clarence Major, Imamu Amiri Baraka, Steve Katz, and Ishmael Reed.

Though their differences are more numerous than their similarities, all have taken part in the trend which, for a time in the late sixties and early seventies, introduced antirealism to mainstream American fiction. Often against their will, they have been grouped together as a school of metafiction, superfiction, surfiction, disruptive fiction, and the like. Joe David Bellamy's *The New Fiction: Interviews with Innovative American Writers* and Jack Hicks's *Cutting Edges: Young American Fiction for the '70s* are symptomatic of the critical habit of collectively calling these writers "new" and "innovative," tacitly assuming that youth (however inappropriate to a writer forty-four years old at the time, or even fifty-one) is superior to age and that "innovative" means "better." But virtually no critic or literary historian of these years, including the author of this essay, can evade responsibility for such facile label making. If indeed there was any sort of breakthrough in fiction, never—as many of these same critics now admit—was it so inaccurately described.

What becomes clear in terms of simple historical observation (something much easier from the distance of 1982) is that the self-reflective innovationists of the Generation of '31 wrote their fiction under tremendous critical pressure: having been told that the novel was dead, they felt compelled to challenge and reinvent conventions of fiction. But the very success of their work—artistically, commer-

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cially, and philosophically—served many contrary interests. Like the boom in Spanish-American literature, described with no small irony by one of its participants, José Donoso, in his book of that name, America's momentary boom in antirealistic fiction has been more useful as a descriptive tool for its enemies than for its writers. Quite unhappily at the center of the Generation of '31 stands John Barth, the writer who was probably most responsible for the boom that antirealistic fiction enjoyed among the commercial publishing houses, and yet, paradoxically, the writer least antirealistic in his approach.

"In a sense, I am Jacob Horner," proclaims the narrator of John Barth's second novel, *The End of the Road* (1958). Sentenced to a self-consciously absurdist therapy of teaching college English, Barth's narrator reminds us of the dispensation under which Barth himself felt he must write. It was 1958—an era which, as Barth saw it, had rejected the Cartesian definition of ego so central to traditional novelistic design. A hero could no longer speak with confidence and coherence and so define himself, since under contemporary philosophical pressure the old *cogito, ergo sum* had become a farcically painful lie.

The End of the Road and Barth's first novel, *The Floating Opera* (1956), were written in the same burst of creative energy during the mid-fifties, when the promise of commercial publication drove Barth to a frenzy of literary production he has not since matched. That first work was not to have been a novel at all, but "a philosophical minstrel show," as Barth described it, not wanting to write a novel yet hoping to make it "a work of literature" nevertheless. Both books turned out to be rather conventional novels in the then-popular style of André Malraux, Albert Camus, and other such reflective writers. Each was heavily philosophical, and the first brushed so closely with absolute nihilism that its original publishers insisted on a different, more humanistically acceptable, ending. (Barth's preferred text is found in the revised and restored edition published by Doubleday in 1967.) But these initial works won Barth the beginnings of a substantial following: not among the reading public (less than 5,000 copies of the two books are estimated to have been sold), but with John Barth's colleagues in the profession of English. A knowledge of literary and philosophical tradition complemented by the experience of teaching were the qualifications of Barth's ideal reader.

Barth's eloquent justification of his technique appeared in his article "The Literature of Exhaustion," published in the *Atlantic* in 1967. A sequel, called "The Literature of Replenishment," for the

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same magazine's January 1980 issue added further commentary pertinent to his works of the intervening years (*Lost in the Funhouse: Fiction for Print, Tape, Live Voice*, 1967; *Chimera*, 1972; and *Letters: A Novel*, 1979). Barth explained that any educated writer in this day and age was faced with "the used-upness of certain forms or exhaustion of certain possibilities" and that this is "by no means necessarily a cause for despair."

In *The Sot-Weed Factor* and *Giles Goat-Boy*, Barth employed various eighteenth-century conventions to make twentieth-century artistic statements. In the former, the secret journal of a character named Henry Burlingame is framed within the narrative adventures of the poet, Ebenezer Cooke; and all the familiar Fieldingesque techniques, so tedious in the hands of anyone but their inventor, are interesting and entertaining because they must be read, not as the product of a third-rate contemporary, but as the studied parody by a brilliant scholar of Fielding's art. In similar manner *Giles Goat-Boy* takes what it can from Swift, substituting an allegory of mid-twentieth-century academic politics as a comment on the state of the world. As technique, the transpositions from Fielding and Swift are flawless; but as Robert Garis and others have complained, they are only technique, offering no new perspective at all and telling readers nothing they do not already know. *Lost in the Funhouse* and *Chimera* are more deliberate investigations of narrative itself, including a cut-out Moebius strip, a series of quotations successively swallowed up by the necessary punctuation marks, a story which narrates its own inception and dissolution, and various retellings of ancient myths. *Letters* functions as a coda to Barth's entire literary career so far, for its seven epistolary authors who exchange correspondence among themselves are either characters from the previous six books or John Barth himself and some of his newly created characters.

This seven-book canon, no small achievement for a writer born in 1931, would be the perfect index of a literary age except for one fact, which its author keeps repeating in his influential essays: he does not sympathize with the spirit of his times. "The Literature of Exhaustion" opens with a playfully sarcastic dismissal of a style of work then being produced by a young writer-publisher outside the conservative academic community, Dick Higgins of Something Else Press. To illustrate this style, Barth includes a good sample (but not all properly attributed to their best practitioners) of literary, theatrical, musical, and artistic work unlike his and his academic colleagues' own, including the assemblage novels of Robert Filliou, the Happenings of Allen Kaprow, the music of John Cage, and the

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pop art of Robert Rauschenberg. All were whimsically degraded as lacking seriousness, discipline, and achievement of stable form, as if these were the prime requisites of artistic success—which Barth indeed believed they were. "The New York Correspondence School of Literature," as he collectively referred to them, was capable of producing interesting ideas for beer-drinking conversation, but was incapable of producing great art.

What Barth overlooked, and what he overlooked more deliberately in his sequel essay in 1980, was that the steady effacement of represented action from works of art in all disciplines—whether literary, dramatic, musical, or graphic—established the esthetic of the twentieth century. This esthetic is traced most easily in the work of artists Barth dismisses as impertinent to his own "high art." The abstract expressionist painters active in New York during the forties and fifties (de Kooning, Pollock and Kline, for example) presented, in critic Harold Rosenberg's words, less "a surface on which to represent" than "an arena in which to act." A work's own action, and not a representation of an action, would be art's subject. The reaction to this esthetic by succeeding generations of creative artists confirmed Rosenberg's critical discovery: pop art, hard-edge, minimal, and conceptual art simply established new kinds of non-Aristotelian expression which could not be merchandised either as imitations of a now salable style or as portable objects in themselves. "Anti-movement" art was the period's capstone. During all these years, however, John Barth was solidly aligned with a tenured academic community and, following the trail of his editors' job promotions, with a succession of mainstream commercial publishers. Each establishment maintained a vested interest in representational literary art, as eminently teachable and salable.

In his 1980 sequel, Barth recalled that his first essay was conceived and written on a university campus beseiged by the challenging forces of demonstrating students and tear-gassing police. It appears that he himself was quite uncomfortable in these circumstances, which others saw as genuinely revolutionary in terms of both curricular and esthetic change. The key to Barth's personal esthetic is in that original essay written during the hectic days of the sixties, where he states his admiration for writers atypical of those times—that is, for writers who replace the representation of one action (an Aristotelian mimesis of behavior within the social world) with another: the act of writing a novel. Each of his examples, which

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include conventionally modernist works by Nabokov, Beckett, and Borges, is similar to his own works, in that each is essentially a mimesis of literature. "Novels which imitate the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the role of the Author" are the books which Barth appreciates and writes himself.

Literary works which suspend the suspension of disbelief, which in anti-Aristotelian fashion include the act of writing by the author and the act of reading by the reader as integral parts of their esthetic, are excluded from Barth's pantheon. He prefers fictions which represent, fictions whose events are metaphors for something else, not something in themselves. For Barth, fiction should forever be an imitation of an action, and not an action in itself.

We regret the death of

HORACE GREGORY

1898–1982

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Helen Frankenthaler

MEMORIES OF THE SAN REMO

9 MARCH 1982

Sunday I read Anatole Broyard's piece in the *Times*, a preface to an essay by the late Milton Klonsky. I found it curiously moving; I say curiously because while I was never "close" to either of them I had a sudden, vividly etched throwback to them and our environment. A giant step backwards, more than three decades.

I keep a pile of literature next to my bed on top of which that article of Anatole's in the Book Review section has rested for several days. I suppose it osmosized into my awake-yet-dream life, and around 1 A.M. this morning I found myself putting the light on, quickly jotting notes, trying to record an already clearly focused picture of that moment. As with a painting, or a symphony, one often has to race to articulate the already given perfectly finished picture in the mind. The image of the San Remo Restaurant, September 1950. A reverie.

I first went there in the late forties—a place "down there in the Village," threatening to my mother: dangerous, it implied heavy drinking, loose sex, and the apotheosis of what was *not* prescribed for a collegiate Upper East Sider. I'd often go there with Gaby Rosenberg (Rodgers)* and our dates; Nice Jewish Girls down from Bennington and Mount Holyoke. We were bohemian-bent. I read *Tiger's Eye*, *PR*, *Kenyon Review*, went to poetry readings at the New School.

The San Remo, corner MacDougal and Bleecker, 1948,49: Italian food! Chianti! Spaghetti al dente with white clam sauce, "good" bread, and danger lurking at the bar or seated, either hunched over or freewheeling at the cafe tables. Every time, there was Milton waiting for Anatole or vice versa. Milton seemed dark, silent, brooding, lethargic. I remember him usually looking down and occasionally looking up and perhaps monosyllabic in a called-for

*her name as a hopeful actress

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response. Anatole seemed jazzy, tuned-in and active, agile with a radiant smile. Longish hair (which was much much longer when I ran into him in the sixties). For us the whole scene was desirable and exotic, including vague rumors that Anatole was part Creole. They were flirty, serious, attractive: the real Village McCoy, and distant. Often they were met by Ernest van den Haag: German, with glasses, he appeared as a scholar-cum-naughty boy, and with his two pals they often tripled-dated with Interesting Looking Girls. He went on to become a teacher, writer, and psychoanalyst. For several years I'd see him around and then he disappeared from my ken.

When they cruised it was not for our square kind; their sometime girls were swingy (not a word used then), tiny, often elegant, sexy. Some were blond tall numbers from the Vassar belt slumming, or *petites vicieuses* loaded with makeup or none at all. Simultaneously the aura of The Intellectual that haloed these two young men implied an atmosphere, the cast of which I was yet to learn. Meantime what was not there, we projected.

Late August or early September 1950, I was eating supper there with Clement Greenberg. (We would be going often in years to come, sometimes alternating with the restaurant's competition, Minetta's, up the street.) It turned out Clem *knew* Anatole! and Milton! Anatole was always eager to connect with Clem and was friendly and chatty. He was introduced to me every time we met. I was dying to talk but had nothing to say. Aggressive but frightened, I looked, I listened, I soaked it up.

Now I occasionally run into Anatole and we nod or have a brief "equal" pleasant exchange since there's the recognition that comes with perspective and *something* that was shared then. At a concert intermission, or the Institute of Arts and Letters spring ceremony. Fleeting déjà vu.

I would always connect the two, like the Katzenjammer Kids (not the Bobbsey Twins), and didn't know until reading Anatole's moving piece in the *Times* that Milton had died. In a way, they were my first observation of what would later be called hippies. ("Hippie" was not a word used then; rather "hip." Not to be confused with "hep"!)

Clem and I once had a snapshot taken on the street across from the San Remo. For about twenty-five cents it was taken and developed on the spot by an Italian who had a box camera on a

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tripod and a pony. He shrouded himself under the black cloth, held up a fake bouquet next to the lens ("Look here and smile"), clicked, and dipped the photograph in a liquid. I sat on the pony for one shot. Then we did another, without the pony, of just me and Clem in a campy postdinner hug.

Camp. A brand new word used by Clem and John Meyers, whom I also met at The Remo early that fall. John came in alone and joined us at our table full of news about a gallery he was starting under the El on 53rd Street, east of Third in a brownstone over an ice supplier. He was excited about plans for a show which he conceived with Marie Menken:* bedsheet sizes of rare lace that lit up in the dark, fluorescent. The idea was that at intervals during the dixie-cupped "wet" opening the lights would be turned out. Pure camp.

As that evening at the restaurant progressed, the two men (equally eager on the subject) discussed Clem's suggestion that there was a need for a more serious gallery that would show some interesting artists who had no place to show. Many of the events and names that followed have been recorded and digested in reruns of the early fifties.

For me, a good picture of that advance guard was formed then, at the San Remo.

*Marie was a large woman married to Willard Maas, the poet. They lived in Brooklyn Heights and gave good parties. Theirs was one of many "undergrounds" of the early fifties; a "frequency" that included the late John LaTouche, who produced *The Golden Apple* in the early days of the Phoenix Theater.

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Edith Kurzweil

ITALIAN LETTER

All in a Week. On March 26, the day the American press announced that "Washington has rediscovered Italy," the demonstration against American involvement in El Salvador in Piazza Navona—Rome's traditional forum for demonstrations— drew a large crowd. Even while the platform was being erected and red banners appeared, there seemed to be fewer American tourists than in the past, more vendors of oriental jewelry and dresses; and for the first time, I noticed the many Arabic newspapers among the other foreign ones. The evening demonstration, however, drew little attention from the press, probably because it was overshadowed by the 300,000 metal workers who had just descended on Rome from all over the country—to protest the widespread layoffs, the negative consequences of accepting ninety percent unemployment insurance as well as the fear of its termination at the end of one year, and the lack of government planning. But the workers' protests against government seemed to have lost some of their former fervor. Before the merger of the three major unions into their powerful federation several years ago, individuals could belong to the CGIL (controlled by the Communists), the CISL (dominated originally by the Christian Democrats and more recently turned radical), or the UIL (primarily Socialist), thus affirming their politics by choosing the "appropriate" union. Now, however, disagreements—for the most part about tactics—are fought within the workers' federation, creating factions that roughly follow party lines. But not completely. In any event, the heated discussions which, this time, were punctuated by rotten eggs, tomatoes, and nasty invectives, indicate the high level of involvement, of sophistication, and the politicization of Italian workers: they no longer follow their representatives blindly, but continue to question nearly every decision. Aware of the economic slump, of the bankruptcy of many firms, and of the worldwide increase in unemployment, workers' polemics no longer primarily address conditions within factories, or wages. Instead, they attack the banks for their high interest rates (now at twenty-five percent) because these prohibit their employers from investing in

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advanced technology, the *cassa integrazione* which subsidizes layoffs that exacerbate inflation, and the "mismanagement of the country" by both government and industry. Nevertheless, the "right to work" that is central in the current negotiations will be difficult to grant to the two and one-half million already unemployed, to those in danger of losing their jobs, and to the young who are about to enter the labor market. "What a mistake to think that work can fall from heaven like manna," stated Eugenio Scalfari, editor of *La Repubblica*, "without changing conditions that make it so scarce. What a mistake to suppose that development of the economy, of income, of investments, and thus of jobs, can exist while industry is in the red and is losing its competitive power to foreign firms, while public finances are weak, the lira is falling, and savings are down." (3/26/82)

Scalfari's editorial was written before the schisms within the labor federation surfaced, before the "agreement" to shorten the announced general strike from eight hours to two hours, and thus before the leader of the UIL had been whistled off the platform for having consented to such a weak show of strength. Still, Scalfari knew that the workers were not only being guided by their past union experiences, and by the successes (and occasional failures) of previous negotiations influenced by preemptive strikes; he also knew that they were being coached by the *Lega Communista Revoluzionaria* (LCR) which hopes to topple the Spadolini government (supported by both Christian Democrats and Socialists) in favor of a coalition between Socialists and Communists. Denouncing labor's "moderate" demands as cooptation, the LCR attacks Italian capitalism, its investment and labor strategies, its willingness to keep wage increases below sixteen percent, its concern with closing unprofitable operations, etc. They want the strikes which traditionally are called before contract negotiations begin to be thoroughly disruptive, and the old slogans of maximalist versus minimalist practices are often trotted out.

These slogans, though roughly corresponding to Communist and Socialist stands, are replayed in other contexts. Hence, the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Filippo Turati's death at Milan's La Scala was dominated by the Communists who refused to give Bettino Craxi, the leader of the Socialists, a role in the ceremonies. So the latter presided at the commemoration at Canzo, Turati's place of birth outside Milan, on March 29, and stressed the fact that Turati had been the founder of the *Socialist* party, and that he had believed in "revolution through reform"—Craxi's own "road

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to socialism." This fact already had been underlined a few days earlier when Craxi, at the opening of the PSDI, the Social Democratic party, spoke of the ends and means the two parties share, and warmly embraced Guiseppe Saragat—the photo was carried in nearly every newspaper. The Socialists' show of solidarity with those on their right, however, not only is an indication that they are bitter enemies of Moscow (the Communist leader Enrico Berlinguer is currently "using" the events in Poland to convince Italians of *his* party's independence; and he met with France's President Mitterand in the hope of reviving a "Euroleft"), but is a bid for the votes of all those who are fed up with the Christian Democrats—and there are many. For this reason, the Socialists can neither go along with the radical rhetoric within the *Federazione dei Lavoratori*, nor can they accept the olive branch tendered by the LCR.

Actually, the Socialists are in good shape since the month's major scandal, which is not yet over, began by involving the Communists and will remain a heavy burden to the Christian Democrats (DC). The Communist paper, *L'Unità*, published a document "proving" that a high-level DC official had dealt with the Red Brigades and had delivered the equivalent of one and one-half million dollars to free Ciro Cirillo, a DC-appointed assessor connected to the camorra. Denials, counteraccusations, and a missing informant, at first, led to public apologies, although the latter were soon followed by proofs of DC culpability—of its involvement with the boss of the camorra, Raffaele Cutolo, who had been imprisoned during the entire incident. The paying of ransom, itself, is not illegal. But that the DC "found" and paid this sum, paid it to the underworld, while claiming never to deal with terrorists and sponsoring antiterrorist legislation, was the latest indication of the party's corruption, and of its bad faith. "They refused to save Aldo Moro, their own leader, for reasons of principle—why did they save a minor functionary?" Speculations abounded. But after the informant —a person currently indicted for various embezzlements—was "apprehended," the mystery deepened. The implications of the affair kept growing, when Cutolo's contacts were found to include members of both of Italy's secret services: every new bit of evidence further disenfranchised the DC. And when two corpses were found (one, that of a famous criminologist, in Cutolo's district—its head in a plastic bag on the front seat and the body in the trunk of the car—the other, his assistant, an apparent suicide) connections between the DC, the camorra, "black" terrorism, and the scandal-ridden

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secret masonic lodge—P2—were confirmed. Italians once more kept asking themselves why so many of their compatriots continue to vote for these corrupt leaders.

During this week, another front-page event was Giovanni Agnelli's heart attack. Luciano Lama, the Communist union leader who easily could be the most formidable opponent of Italy's first citizen, and who is pushing the maximalist line in the national strikes projected for April—strikes centering on FIAT—was the first to send his good wishes. Agnelli's state of health, his diet, his visitors, and his activities were avidly followed until it was known that he was recovering. And so were stories about the fact that Agnelli was in the emergency unit together with charity patients, and that some of his workers had come to inquire personally about how he was doing; and that they were hoping for his recovery. For in addition to being the class enemy, the symbol of capitalist wealth and high living, Agnelli remains, also, a paternal image—incorporating all the ambivalences associated with paternalism.

On the surface, of course, Italy rejects these traditions. But institutions change slowly. Even negotiations among industry, labor, and government, though very different in context, continue to resemble the corporatist practices instituted by Mussolini: but the balance of power is much more fluid and unpredictable. No longer worried about fascism, Italians are serious about their democracy. Hence they participate actively in politics. Remembering all the scandals, and who was involved, they have become extremely skeptical not only of their leaders, but of *all* politicians. That is why President Reagan ought to be particularly careful when once more doing the right thing for the wrong reasons, as he did by receiving Italy's Socialist president, Sandro Pertini, "with open arms, in the name of all of America." The Italians I spoke to, and those whom I heard on television or read about in the press, were somewhat ambivalent about the grand reception Pertini was accorded. Pleased with the tone of the meetings, philo-Americans expected this friendship—given Italy's "dependence" on America, and its past cooperation—while the others paid scant attention to the ceremonials. But the timing was considered suspect. For Italy's media have been reporting freely about America—about our bellicose stance in El Salvador, the debates on military expenditures, and the reports about the simulated nuclear war in early March were published just as President Pertini arrived in the U.S. Never before did I hear so much fear of war—war that might annihilate Europe and its popula-

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tions. This is not to say that Italians are friendly to the Soviet Union. On the contrary, even their Communists allege to fear its repression. But President Reagan's declarations of military might and of projected armaments that are aimed to reach behind the Iron Curtain are listened to and magnified. Inevitably, local Communists make the most of understandable fears, as they organize meetings for the Salvadorean insurgents, which then turn into general attacks against "American imperialism," into denunciations of warmongering, and into recollections of our role in Vietnam.

If the word is mightier than the sword, then our representatives have used it badly. For it is being turned against us, not only by "enemies," but by those friends who would "want to live in America to escape the neutron bomb," and by those who listen to Reaganomics. I am not at all addressing America's need for defense, but the fact that pompous, excessive, and exaggerated public statements about it are countereffective. Such statements, in fact, will make it more difficult for President Pertini to convince Italian voters to support NATO, or to be in "the first line of defense." In addition, Americans underestimate the importance Italians and other Central Europeans attribute to their emergence as a "third force"—even though at the twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations of the European Economic Community only the weaknesses of the alliance managed to be highlighted. This third force, however illusory it might be, is perceived by some as another capitalist coalition, and by others as a means of constructing a Eurosocialism. But the hope that a strong Europe will act as a buffer, or rather as a way out, between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. is greater than ever. This is a given. So whether we like it or not, we must remember that while all the European countries continue to depend on us to protect them, their first allegiance is to each other—no matter how much they may quarrel.

April 3, 1982

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IDEAS IN SEASON

Leon Wieseltier

The intellectuals of the Left were in the news this winter; the intellectuals of the Right are always in the news, or so it seems. Being in the news, however, is not good for the mind. Slogans are manufactured, instead of ideas. Arguments are abbreviated, until they are no arguments at all. This was the case with the great disputation about communism that was occasioned by Susan Sontag's statement at a meeting called by Writers and Artists in Support of Solidarity on February 6 to protest the repression in Poland. The purpose of the meeting was to make the protest in a language that was not Ronald Reagan's. A worthy purpose, certainly, though not everything that Reagan says is wrong. It is difficult, in fact, to demur from the President's analysis of the Polish situation in his Christmas speech. The same cannot be said about those who compared the fate of Solidarity to the fate of PATCO, or who contended (as did Gore Vidal) that even as Poland is occupied by troops America is occupied by corporations; you demur from such views or you are a fool. Sontag demurred. She accused the Left of having averted its gaze from the essential character of communism. A friend who was at Town Hall, a learned historian of American radicalism and once a radical himself, phoned to report that Sontag's speech was "a turning point in the history of the American Left." He reported, too, that she was booed. She must have done something right, I thought. When I read her remarks, I thought again. They are an undistinguished contribution to a distinguished cause.

Sontag's conclusion quickly became famous. (It was delivered in the epigrammatic manner that is the intellectual's best hope for fame.) "Communism," she said, "*is* fascism—successful fascism, if you will." And, at once, she repeated: "Communism is in itself a variant, the most successful variant, of fascism. Fascism with a human face."

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Stop. A human face? This is a curious way to condemn communism. Where, exactly, is this human face? Surely not in the conduct of communism in the societies it has controlled. It must lie elsewhere—in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, presumably, and in *The Russian Revolution*, and in the *Prison Notebooks*. These texts are indeed suffused with human ideals. But there are other texts, no less critical to the communist canon, that are suffused with ideals considerably less human. From its very origins there has been present in communism a cult of the impersonal forces of history. The entire intellectual tradition of Bolshevism, which is essentially an eschatological theory of dictatorship, is based upon the belief that the individual is not the unit of redemption. There is no human face to Lenin. (He once concluded a letter to his mistress by reminding her of "the objective logic of class relations in affairs of love.") But Lenin is not Marx, we are frequently told, usually by people who have failed to prove that Stalin is not Lenin. Sontag has wisely lost interest in these distinctions; she called the whole damn thing communism, which was a bit of her offense. And yet she insisted upon this human face, which is only a part, and not a very large part, of communist theory, and no part at all of communist practice. Communism is a fantasy of power disguised as a fantasy of justice. Sontag has not ripped the disguise completely away.

Communism is fascism—that kind of talk is not a contribution to clarity. It is true that the coup in Poland posed a real problem of political morphology, a problem that Sontag's crude formation was supposed to solve. The problem was the replacement of party rule by army rule. Poland looked like a new phenomenon within communism—not because the workers were put down by the workers' state, but because the structure of the workers' state seemed to shift. The workers' state became a military state; "socialism" was spread by soldiers, not bureaucrats. Sontag surveyed "the methods and . . . the language" of martial law in Poland—"the demand for 'normalization' and 'order,' the re-legitimizing of antisemitism, military rule presented in the guise of a 'Committee for National Salvation' "—and saw "the standards of fascist rule." The presence of these standards were, for her, a surprise. They should not have been. When was antisemitism ever not legitimate in the history of communism (or in the history of Poland)? And, more to the point, when was communism ever unavailed of the military and the police? In every communist system that has ever existed, terror has been the antistrophe of ideology. The notion that communist regimes are not

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undergirded by such an apparatus, that the military does not have a central role in the structure of communist power, is part of that left-wing nostalgia that Sontag stood against. Tanks are never far away from any regime that has a problem of legitimacy. To be sure, the occupation of Poland by its own army was a rather extreme demonstration of communism's reliance upon this kind of muscle, though the regular army was swiftly replaced by the ZOMOs, the security police more accustomed to such an atrocity. And had the Polish army been unwilling to betray the Polish people, the Russian army would have done the dirty work, as it did in the past. Moreover, the phenomenon of a military takeover in a self-styled revolutionary society is hardly unknown in the annals of Marxism. It is not fascism; it is Bonapartism. Lenin called Kerensky a Bonapartist, and Trotsky called Stalin a Bonapartist. The analogy was, in neither case, exactly correct, nor is it in Poland, but there is certainly a bit of Bonapartism in Jaruzelski. A general stepped in when the classes were in chaos, to prevent the final triumph of the proletariat over the privileged.

Fascism is something more than a junta. And there are juntas that are something more than fascism—communist juntas, for example. The equation of communism with fascism is kind to communism. There has not yet been a fascist government that murdered as many people as the communist government of Stalin. The numbers are numbing. The economic and political plans of that one man cost well over eighty million lives. In the matter of corpses, communism is the only thing as unthinkable as the bomb. A comparison with fascism, then, adds nothing. It only takes away. Both must be fought, even to the death; but they are not the same thing.

Sontag's analysis was also a confession. "People on the left have wittingly or unwittingly told a lot of lies." "We did not love the truth enough." She offered a reason:

> I have asked myself many times in the past six years or so how it was possible that I could have been so suspicious of what Milosz and other exiles from Communist countries . . . were telling us. Why did we not have a place for, ears for, their truth. The answers are well known. We had identified the enemy as fascism. We heard the demonic language of fascism. We believed in, or at least applied a double standard to, the angelic language of Communism.

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After Poland, however, no more. It has been observed about Sontag's change of heart, most credibly by Diana Trilling, that honesty about communism is not exactly heroic in 1982. (Bernard-Henri Levy felt entitled to make the same observation, having discovered the truth about communism as early as 1977.) Still, anti-communism, even late and loosely put, is correct. And yet Sontag's anticommunism leaves a doubt. The idea is there, but it is strangely inflected. Consider her case, again. "We" were not enough opposed to communism because "we" were too much opposed to fascism. And the reason "we" must be more opposed to communism is—because it is fascism! Where, then, is the change? The basis of Sontag's anti-communism is antifascism. The equation of communism with fascism makes you think that this was not quite the conversion it was cracked up to be. Fascism is still the criterion of crime, the fact that puts the fire in her blood.

I do not mean to suggest that Sontag is not anticommunist enough; such inquisitions I leave to *Commentary* and the *National Review*. I mean to suggest, rather, that the habits of anti-anticommunism die hard, harder even than Sontag thinks. She has accomplished a rather curious thing; she has arrived at a perfectly praiseworthy position in a manner that destroys all confidence in her judgment. Her statement at Town Hall was, finally, the political apology of an unpolitical person. Only an unpolitical person could support, as she did in her reply to her critics, something she called "the democratic movement in El Salvador." There is no democratic movement in El Salvador. There are parties. Some are revolutionary, and shoot citizens on their way to the polls; some are reformist, and seek to implement some meritorious programs by the indulgence of the military; some are reactionary, and kill any adversary they can. An imperfect (that is, political) choice must be made, a choice that Sontag stays above by supporting only a "democratic movement," which is perfect.

Her reflections on communism are similarly innocent of the practice of politics. She is taking positions, that's all. A really serious anticommunism might be a little less worried about being mistaken for "reactionary forces." Russia is a greater threat to the idea of democracy than the Republican Party. There are times, therefore, when intellectually unattractive alliances must be made. A hawkish foreign policy may be based upon a view of the world that is philosophically odious, upon a form of patriotism that rides roughly over

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values dear to the democratic Left, but if that policy succeeds in restraining the Russians, the democratic Left, too, will be in its debt. The response of the Reagan administration to the Polish coup was indeed characterized, as Sontag said, by "utter hypocrisy"—not because the President failed to live up to his rhetoric in El Salvador, as she went on to say, but because he failed to live up to his rhetoric in Poland. He promised to be the sort of man who would punish the Russians for this sort of push, and he did not. He may be criticized from the left for not acting from the right; that is, he may be criticized by anticommunists for not acting like an anticommunist. The difference between "our" style of anticommunism and "their" style of anticommunism is trivial for the purpose of weakening the Jaruzelski regime. Sontag came out against the extension of credit to Poland. So did Caspar Weinberger. Sontag, however, is uneasy. She needn't be, because Weinberger was right. And he spoke for her. Politics is not pretty. Taking positions is.

Sontag's utterance performed a service, however; it smoked out an impressive number of intellectuals for whom communism is not quite a moral and political point of reference. Edward Said, for example. He recalled that "there are numerous pro-US regimes whose practices are at least as violent" as the pro-USSR regime in Poland. Said then proposed a rather novel procedure for intellectuals to follow in politics: "Either intellectuals describe as well as criticize what is closest to them, what is in fact within their range of direct, responsible competence, however painful it might be to do so, or they become willing agents of the state, legitimizers of its policies." The mind's limit, in other words, may be measured in miles; it is futile to focus a critical intelligence upon things that are so far away. And Said went on: "Those of us who do not happen to be European ask ourselves today why organized intellectual disapproval of General Jaruzelski, or the Salvadoran junta, is routinely, one might even say calculatedly, not turned on the Begin-Sharon policy for the West Bank and Gaza?" But he has answered his own question. The West Bank and Gaza are so far away. They are even farther away from the "range of direct, responsible competence" of American intellectuals than Poland. For the Palestinians, however, American intellectuals are expected to stretch themselves. Is this a double standard, or a single mind? Let us say it is a single mind. And how single! Said makes it tempting to point

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out that Jaruzelski is working for the same man as Arafat. But no; the subject is Poland, not Palestine. It is important to resist such a shrinkage of the intellectual vocation. Said has not. No doubt he is in favor of disarmament because the destruction of the world would rob the Palestinians of their right to self-determination.

Noam Chomsky was similarly serene about the developments in Poland. "What lessons are to be drawn from the imposition of martial law in Poland? The answer, in my view, is: virtually none." In a sense, that is true; Chomsky never learns. At least not from misery that comes from Moscow. The developments in Indochina, however, or in Central America, are always full of lessons. There was something that Chomsky did say about Poland, though, that deserves study. He denied that the matter has any bearing upon either "socialism" or "communism." The form that his denial took was breathtaking. "For differing reasons, the world's two greatest propaganda systems have long been united in describing Leninist regimes as a form of 'socialism' or 'communism.' This position has always been rejected by the libertarian Left, which recognized that 'socialism will be free or it will not be at all' (Rudolph Rocker)." With this semantic trick Chomsky slips by the experience of whole societies. The problem of Poland need not be solved, as the philosophers say, but cured; like many philosophers' problems, it is only a misuse of language, a misdefinition of a term. Define socialism properly and it is out of danger. Define it improperly and millions die; still, its career in the concrete is no proof against it. In fact, this is not at all like philosophy; it is like theology. More specifically, like the theology of the one true believer. Only he does not take God's name in vain.

Said's and Chomsky's replies to Sontag appeared in the late *Soho Weekly News*, but it was in the pages of the *Nation*, where Sontag published the text of her statement, that the Left's replies to her anti-communism were most clearly given. Some argued that they had never been deceived; some, that there was nothing to have been deceived about; some, that they had been deceived, but not exactly by communism; some, that the deception was a reason for hope.

Philip Green and Aryeh Neier argued that they had never been deceived. They were certainly never procommunist; and yet they are not known by their anticommunism. The same may be said of many on the democratic Left. They are good people. They detest dictators. Yet they speak more against some than against others.

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That is in part because they do not wish to be counted in the company of certain kinds of anticommunists, though this has the effect only of leaving them the field; and in part because they consider themselves more directly implicated by the actions of their own government, which is honorable, but also a variety of isolationism. The anticommunists of the Left may be charged, then, with a failure of emphasis. In politics, however, that is not a trifling matter. It poses the question of the nature of political conviction. Political conviction is not precisely a form of knowledge. It must include heat as well as light. There is your conviction, and your feelings about your conviction. It is possible to have a conviction and to have no feelings about it. It is impossible to have feelings about everything. The convictions about which you have feelings are those by which you will be known. The anticommunism of the Left is not the conviction about which it has feelings. The light is there, but the heat is elsewhere. And where the heat is, there is little concern about the company; few left-wing supporters of the Palestinians, for example, worry about sharing a position with the oil companies, or will leave them the field. The democratic Left is sincere in its anticommunism, then, but it has reserved its greatest feelings for evil of a lesser magnitude. Of that much it is guilty.

Andrew Kopkind argued that there was nothing to have been deceived about; North Vietnam, he maintained, is "proceeding dialectically according to the forces and furies of the real world," and may "express more truth and justice" in the future than it does now. Philip Pochoda and Daniel Singer argued that they had been deceived, but not exactly by communism. Stalinism, rather, was all that was wrong. Pochoda denied that "Communism, all Communism, is Stalinist," that "Communism, all Communism, all Communisms, are 'utter villainy.' "(For somebody who fusses so much about communism's details, Pochoda is rather ignorant. He lists Hannah Arendt in the tradition of Luxemburg and Gramsci, and he thinks that Lenin made his famous remark about electrification in 1919.) These men are unreconstructed utopians. They believe that utopianism after the revolution is like utopianism before the revolution. They err. The revolution made a difference. It changed visionaries into accomplices.

Pochoda and Green argued that the deception was reason for hope; theirs was the most incredible argument of all. Green put it this way:

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> The nature of the Eastern European rebellions is precisely what has illuminated a crucial difference between Communism and fascism. The neofascist regimes that Jeane Kirkpatrick is so fond of have been much less successful than Communist regimes at producing revolts of an organized, democratic working class aimed at the creation of economic democracy. These regimes (e.g., Chile's and Argentina's) are built around the violent suppression of organized labor. In Communist Eastern Europe, on the other hand, the hypocritical Marxism of the ruling elites is an unremitting provocation, in constant danger of being taken seriously by the people. Thus, those regimes have generated three exhiliratingly promising revolts in twenty-five years, none of which was anti-socialist and all of which attempted a welding of Marxism and liberal democracy. . . . It often produces democratic socialist rebels.

This is political theodicy. There is no evil that cannot be justified in this way. Racism may be forgiven, because it produced the civil rights movement; colonialism may be forgiven, because it produced the movements of national liberation; and so on. This is also a doctrine of salvation through suffering. The societies of the communist world are told that they need their long dark night to be delivered, that they must die unto this world to live in a better one to come. The violation of human rights, the regimentation of culture, the torture and murder of millions—all are somehow vitiated by the "exhilirating" epiphanies of Budapest, Prague, and Warsaw. The epiphanies ended, of course, and the evil was restored; but they will, for that very reason, happen again. Is so little really worth so much? Kirkpatrick's excuse for fascism is, in this respect, less troubling than Green's excuse for communism. In Spain, Portugal, and Greece, there were no epiphanies; there was a return, a rather durable return, to democracy. But it is not exactly democracy that will satisfy Green. He wants "economic democracy" and "democratic socialism" and "a welding of Marxism and liberal democracy," all of which are rather more. These are noble ideals. Given the present condition of life under communism, however, couldn't he settle, if only temporarily, for something a little less than Tawney?

The best I leave for last. It is the *Nation*. It published this whole debate alongside an advertisement, a half page in length, which offers more instruction about the Left's attitude to communism, about

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its learning disability, than anything Sontag or her critics said. The ad was called, "Spend Your Vacation with The Nation and Cruise Up the Volga, Aug. 5-21, 1982." It continued: "Find out for yourself what's going on in the Soviet capital and heartland . . . on an exciting, affordable Soviet excursion." The itinerary includes "exploring the Kremlin," "picnicking, a swim, and folk dancing on Don Cossack Island," a visit to Lenin's birthplace, and duty-free shopping in Moscow. The trip's "special feature," arranged for evenings after days "soaking up the sun," is "nightly dialogues with leading Soviet and American experts on the politics of and prospects for nuclear disarmament."

I do not invent this. It is there. They really are going. And it will be, as they say, duty free. This is the journal in which Sontag chose to settle her accounts with communism. Here she is, proclaiming that communism is as bad as fascism. Here are her critics, proclaiming that it is not. And here is the *Nation*, sailing right through it. *Sauve qui peut.*

The challenge to the Left is to be serious about communism. The challenge to the Right is to be serious about fascism. The challenge to the intellectuals is to be serious, period.

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POEMS

Colette Inez

ALL THINGS ARE ONE, SAID EMPEDOCLES IN A LIGHT AS PROBABLE AS HUME

Immanuel Kant sets his clock
in another warp of Germany? Could be.
In any event, the sun's slow watch
ticks off a time for the snowgeese to fly
from our sentences and paragraphs.

Fine words won't butter the parsnips, you quip.
Agreed. Tonight the stars will strike
unreasonable facts in the dark
of Sagittarius as I look for an arrow
of light and tell you the story of Orion

bringing the spoils of the chase to Merope,
his legendary love. You accuse me of loving
bookwords, "eleemosynary," "asseverate"
when you open your wine of a good recent year.

Dizzy and skimping over syllables, later
we see The Hunter with his sword pointing
to our door from his forest in the galaxy.

So many times I have heard our murmuring
at the top of the stairs, the habits of speech
we let go as we climb towards the night's disorders
and dreams, for this is the way we lock out the dark

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in its autumn constellation, above precise assemblages
of trees, their orderly sorrow of changing leaves,
in the middle of a continent, paw paw, basswood,
hawthorn, ash.

Charles Simic

MY WEARINESS OF EPIC PROPORTIONS

I like it when
Achilles
gets killed

and even unfortunate
Hector
and that sad monster
Agamemnon

and the entire Greek
and Trojan *jeunesse dorée*
is more or less
expertly slaughtered

so there's finally
peace and quiet
(the gods having momentarily
shut up)

one can hear
a bird sing
and a daughter ask her mother
whether she can go to the well

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and of course she can

by that lovely little path
that winds through
the olive orchard

Marianne Boruch

THE BLUE-BLACK LIGHT

A child with a gun
is parting the bushes next to the house
his foot dropping steadily
over stones, over darkened grass.
Breathing is difficult as the moment
nears
        I put down my book
in this blue-black light, as if water
could or needed to be
read. What was I thinking: *remote*
possible. I know that
stirring, how quick it happens
now the child
slipping out of the leaves
not a shadow at all
but a thought
                slipping out of its mind
sucking up the room
as I sit swearing I
haven't heard a human voice for years.
The trees wild, small winds
ruthless in their courage

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the child
trembles on the walkway
what shiny
thing in the heart surrenders
or is opaque.

Ralph Angel

NOT TO REACH GREAT HEIGHTS, BUT TO STAY OUT OF GREAT VALLEYS

There's a wind in the leaves of the trees.
It's a river of bone-chips and feathers.
And the visible stars, in their airy
chasms, are fishes. I am kissing fishes.

I'm on my way to your place.
Do you hear my footsteps on the stairs,
and feel my cold lips
on your cheek? I am saying, "hello, friend."

A few neighbors huddle on the corners
with upturned collars and turned out
pockets. The blue smell of metal and
night things—an old gal snoozes with cans,

a bearded boy embraces a telephone pole.
And they're shooting each other, again,
at Los Globos. Splinters of bone
fall from the window like fishscales.

The band of spectators rises ecstatically.

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They're the cause of their own
good fortune, they believe, but the lie
is like the crime itself, with its excuses.

"Hello, friend," I am saying
on top of the hill. You are wearing
stockings and slippers and a few sweaters;
it's always so cozy in your kitchen.

Have the pipes finally choked?
The ceilings are leaking. The stairwell
and hallway are lined with cakepans;
there are puddles everywhere. A puddle of

light has formed beneath your door. Ah, good.
I want you to be there. Are you there?

Anne Bromley

BIRDS IN THE HAND

The character of this moment
is a young Japanese-American
seated in a bus station, his head down,
his fingers rubbing the bird
he has just made out of newspaper. The last letter
of the headline is on the tip of the left wing.

He learned the art of origami at 5
when the time was right to know
that a perfect bird, dog, or butterfly
was a matter of tissue . . . pale blue, yellow, green.

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"It is more supple," his mother had told him.
She could make a dog in 2 minutes
and the foreigners would be amazed, try
their own versions and learn
that their hands were like thick dough
through which no beak, wing, or head could grow.

At the end of each creation
his mother would blow air into the body
then rise from her knees, slide open
the rice paper door and let in
the flat, white moon.

Yusef Komunyakaa

NEWPORT BEACH, 1979

To them I'm just a crazy nigger
out watching the ocean
drag in silvery nets of sunfish,
dancing against God's spine—
if He's earth, if He's a hunk of celestial bone,
if He's real as Superman
holding up the San Andreas Fault.

Now look Miss Baby Blue Bikini
don't get me wrong.
I'm not the Redlight Bandit,
not Mack the Knife, or Legs Diamond
risen from the dead
in a speakeasy of magenta sunsets perpetually
overshadowing nervous breakdowns.

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I'm just here where first degree eyes
look at me like loaded dice,
as each day hangs open
in hurting light like my sex
cut away & tied to stalks
of lilies, with nothing else
left to do for fun.

Suzanne Ostro Zavrian

"ANNE LEANING ON A TABLE"

from a painting by Avigdor Arikha

Anne Leaning on a Table
is anything but restful,
slipping from the table
as the world tilts
to a gentle and receiving floor;
Anne Leaning on a Table
ineffectually clutches
to stop herself from sliding
down; her hands
reluctantly release it, as
she goes into a deeper sleep,
the pills that she has taken
one by one after having walked
the floor for hours,
nervously clutching and unclutching
her hands that keep
crumpling and smoothing the note
her lover left her

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before he went out the door
to the railway station
joining the person for whom,
led blindly by darker sources
than even he could understand,
he had written the note to Anne,
never dreaming
the train would crash so soon,
derail, hurtling over the embankment
and his limbs mingle forever
not with his new love,
but with the man two seats up
across the aisle
who trustingly places his brains
in Anne's lover's quiet hands;
while in the meantime Anne,
after pacing and crumpling and smoothing,
settles down to 120 sleeping pills,
which she drinks methodically with water,
having no idea that at that very moment,
turning a corner in Kansas City,
is a blond man with blue eyes,
corn-fed and wheat-fed,
who at that *very* moment
thinks of moving to Anne's city, and
intends to call at the very address
where right this minute Anne is on
pill number 53;
it may be that they will find her in time,
and she will sit out her days
in the wooden wheelchair the carpenter built
for her great-grandfather,
who had never tried to kill himself
but rather had very bad lumbago,
watched over by the young blond man
from Kansas City who could easily

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devote his life to her, he is
good and simple and kind
and also impotent,
because 119 pills of that variety
of sleep-inducing medication
will frequently cause severe paralysis;
Anne, however, not knowing—
or would she care?—
is now up to pill number 76,
while her lover's new love,
although he would not now discover
it was mere infatuation,
light and passing as measles on
a bright July day,
hangs half-scalped from a girder
under the bridge spanning the
railway embankment, and
sways occasionally in the passing breeze,
making a pretty picture if you do not
look too close,
as the painting of Anne Leaning on a Table
can be deceptive, if you only glance at it
in passing, thumbing a book.

Eileen Stratidakis

ORBITS

They sit on the ground in circles,
weaving their tales like rugs
to keep them warm.
The hunt is still the game;

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they drink in time to drums,
pretending not to hear.

Outside the ring a woman
sways in golden loops;
her arms are singing vines
waiting to be touched.
It is the only dance she knows.
They do not give her fire.

Ricardo Pau-Llosa

ST. GEORGE AND THE NOTARY

after the painting by David Manzur

The dreamer holds all the cards,
but he plays on, feels the striped
lance near the nape that opens
on hinges, the inside of the skull
dark as a robbed crypt.
Already he is the dragon
depite his seals, his sure
accounts, his name
in high relief. The charger
comes all the same,
the steed rearing into a pose
for an absent tourist
to snap an absent photograph.
Only the notary slain
by the knight is a witness
to his undoing, his arms

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raised somewhere between
shock and benediction.
St. George knows
there is no damsel
in this dream, only
the notary overlooking
a formal garden, sitting
at his desk on a terrace
of black and white tiles.
The fly on the table ignores
the stallion's marble rage.
Even the saint and the slain
must come to know that where the body is,
there too will vultures gather.

Stephen Ackerman

FLAG DAYS

My sister's sense of humor
If it had developed sooner
Would have grown in me like a flag
Approaching from a distant parade.

The sun is shining on the parade ground and on the burial ground.

The soapbox orator orates,
"A banner month if my flag grows.
Add the star
Of the Lone Star State."

The sun is shining on the parade ground and on the burial ground.

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What, except the country, grew
Like a flag? What, except the flag,
Grew with the country? Was it
A romance, a family romance?

The sun is shining on the parade ground and on the burial ground.

Must it be so? Yes.
It must. No, it need not.
Need I do it? No,
You need not. Yes,
You must.

Kathleen Spivack

LEAVING BEHIND

leaving behind
the curved path to the ocean
leaving the summer buzz
of the cicadas
leaving the sudden opening, surprise,
of the horizon, the sea,
the white boats,
the smallness of them, faraway;
leaving the heat
leaving my body, my brown legs,
leaving the way
we cut the water
and how the sun, that laser,
was the focus
toward which we turned:

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leaving all this
to lie in a bed
under the steady sound of rain;
cold coming,
the quilt reminding
of the endless blankets later:
so much closer now, my love,
as the dark grows huge
as an animal,
and the leaves flare
with ecstasy and loss.

John de Stefano

OCCASIONAL POEM

Tacit
volume of
a photograph: Life-

size sculpture
of an angel, left

in another age
to crumble among
the elements. Time is

the shape it
takes.

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REDS: TWO VIEWS

Dwight Macdonald

REDS: EPIC TEDIUM

I've been disappointed in the movies ever since I gave up my *Esquire* column in 1966. Thirteen films since then have been enjoyable: *La Cage aux Folles, Rosemary's Baby*, a Soviet comedy called something like *Moscow Laughs* (first in movie history to be funny), *Silent Movie, Nashville, The Philadelphia Story*, Kubrick's *2001*,* the musical *Kiss Me Kate*, Brian de Palma's *Carrie*, and the two latest films by the aging but not aged master, Buñuel: *The Phantom of Liberty* (1974) and *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977).

So by the time I saw Warren Beatty's *Reds* I didn't expect much, and wasn't disappointed. This despite, or perhaps because of, its being admired by critics as diverse as Vincent Canby, David Denby, and Stanley Kauffman; being nominated for many Oscars and gathering several; and being voted best movie of 1981 by the New York Film Critics Circle. Only last night, five months after *Reds* opened, I saw a line two blocks long waiting to see it at a neighborhood theatre.**

Reds seems like five hours, is three and a half, and should be under two. Its chief defects are as follows:

To begin with, there's Beatty himself in every way—as director, producer, script writer, and actor.

"Judging by *Ten Days that Shook the World*, Reed talked about politics nonstop. You couldn't shut him up," observes Colin Wester-

*Notably the Pan Am flight to the moon it begins with. *2001* expired with the death of its only human character, Hal the computer.

**I had a recurrent fantasy as I passed these innocents. Suppose I whispered to them: "It's lousy!" backing it up with some cards I must get printed up some time: "DWIGHT MACDONALD, *film critic*." Would many have been deterred? I doubt it. In this country, nothing succeeds like success.

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brook in *Commonweal*. "In the movie, he [Beatty] is the same kind of tongue-tied numbskull he played in *Shampoo*." It takes more self-discipline than Beatty has to play and direct himself successfully. He indulges himself grossly. There's a repeated series of corny sight gags: the dog that scratches at the door whenever Jack and Louise Bryant are making love, Jack's bumping his head on the chandelier, etc. As Pauline Kael sums it up in her judicious review in the *New Yorker*: "The same instinctive showmanship that robs Beatty's performance of force robs the movie of content. Whatever he started out to make the picture for, he has replaced it with stale gags and bits of business he thinks will work with an audience."

Some critics have praised Beatty for the ambitious scope of *Reds*—not many Paramount-financed movies have such aspirations. But, while I agreed with President Hoover that prohibition was "an experiment noble in purpose," that didn't make me admire it. So too in art: good intentions grow like blackberries but your pail isn't filled until they're picked.

There's an early glimpse of Reed climbing into one of Pancho Villa's wagons—he reported Pershing's punitive expedition—but it's so brief as to be subliminal. It is typical of Beatty's lost opportunities for the action that an epic film needs, whether Eisenstein's *October* or David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*.

Reds' chief distortion of historical reality as well as one of its major defects is its portrait of Reed's wife, Louise Bryant. Diane Keaton is a good actress but this role defeats her by its inconsistency. She's like a chameleon on a Scotch plaid, very uncertain.

Bryant is shown as a muddleheaded, pretentious feminist who never knows the score politically, is mute at the men's discussions (and whines about it), and is expert at nothing except ball-cutting. How two men like Reed and Eugene O'Neill could be attracted by her is a mystery. And would the Louise of the first half become the Louise of the ending who makes a dangerous trip to Russia with her husband? Rhetorical question.

The real Louise was the equal of Reed and O'Neill and it's not strange they became her lovers. She was a professional journalist, and her articles on the 1917 revolution were syndicated widely, and she was not fired by the syndicate as the movie claims. (Does Beatty have an antifeminist subconscious?) "When Bryant and Reed first met in 1916," Laura Cottingham writes in the *Soho News*, "Louise was an editor for the Portland weekly *Spectator* and a frequent contributor

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to *Blast*, a San Francisco anarchist weekly. . . . *Reds*, however, shows Bryant dragging Reed off to her studio where she serves coffee while he educates her on revolutionary ideas, as though she wasn't as informed as he was. . . . The film depicts Bryant as uninformed and not accepted by Reed's radical crowd, but actually she was never without an opinion or a voice."

The day after I saw *Reds*, I saw on my TV set *Nicholas and Alexandra*, a 1971 British film which was sympathetic to the Czarist side and which I found more moving and much more spectacular than *Reds*. It had shots of the storming of the Winter Palace, the crux of Reed's book. *Reds* has none, its camera being limited to the interior of the Smolny Institute where the debates between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks took place.

Nicholas and Alexandra even quotes Trotsky's phrase about the March revolution, the real one: "Power was lying in the streets and no one picked it up." They even have the famous shot, from Eisenstein's *October*, of the cruiser *Aurora* anchored in the Neva to shell the Palace. Such intimations of reality are not to be found in Beatty's politically unsophisticated film.

Reds does have some good points. The photography is beautiful, the colors muted yet vivid. But, as I've remarked elsewhere, you can't live on photography.

There are some good performances. Beatty holds down Jack Nicholson, as O'Neill, to his best acting in years—none of those mannerisms that have become his trademark. George Plimpton is good as an art expert with a letch for Louise and Jerzy Kozinsky is superb as Zinoviev. Unlike Beatty, Kozinsky is an intellectual and so he gets inside the bureaucratic mind with frightening effect. And Maureen Stapleton is unexpectedly convincing as Emma Goldman.

Beatty also had the brilliant notion of using throughout the film, as a sort of Greek Chorus, contemporaries of Reed who comment on him and on the revolution from time to time: Henry Miller, Rebecca West, George Jessel, Will Durant, *et al.* (He tried but failed to get Walter Lippmann, who was a Harvard classmate of Reed's.) Unfortunately, these ancestral voices aren't identified on the screen—only on a stand in the lobby—and so one can't tell who's speaking, Miller or Jessel—it does make a difference. Even when he has a good idea, Beatty manages to louse it up.

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Reds has popped up everywhere, even in the White House. There was some snickering—did the President think it was the Cincinnati Reds?—but, as William F. Buckley, Jr. explained in his column: "The story has it that when the movie was over, Mr. Reagan, palpably embarrassed, commented that everyone was sorry the Soviet experiment hadn't turned out quite the way John Reed had foretold. . . . Actually this is nonsense if you have seen the film. . . . True, it takes scant notice of the fact that Lenin took the revolution away from the Social Democrats and that never again would Russia see democracy, but Mr. Beatty was writing less history than romance." Buckley concludes: "As a movie, *Reds* suffers from its extraordinary length, the sort of thing that happens when the same person writes, produces, directs, and stars in a movie. *Reds* suffers from an exaggerated case of narcissism," a critique that agrees with many others besides mine. What *could* that New York Film Critics Circle have been thinking of?

The Soviet Union is now making a three-part movie about John Reed. "It will give back to Reed some of the starchy rectitude the Beatty film took away," John Burns writes in the February 8 *Times*. The director is Sergei Bondarchuk, who made his reputation with a spectacular *War and Peace* and so presumably knows his business better than Beatty. He will have other advantages: the use of the original settings in Leningrad instead of Beatty's mock-ups in Spain and Finland, ten thousand extras for the storming of the palace, etc. Nobody could expect Mosfilm to provide all this for *Reds*, but Beatty might have been granted the Winter Palace for location shots had he asked. On past form, however, one suspects he didn't.

Pauline Kael sums it up: "In technique, *Reds* is the least innovative epic you can imagine. It's in expensive, ritzy, big-historical-movie taste.

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Daniel Bell

REDS: A FABLE

That was long, long ago; and
besides, it was not true anyway.
—old Russian saying

Reds is a film that runs 3 hours and 22 minutes, with an intermission. It seems like two films, and it is; the one about Louise Bryant, the other about John Reed.

The first film derives from a novel. Most such films seek to adapt a novel literally, yet invariably fail because the rhythm and texture of words on a page, controlled by the stop-and-go reflections of the reader, cannot be repeated on the different picture plane in the different sensuousness of images imposed by the cutting and montage of the director. Some few films, however, often unintentionally, transpose a novel onto film not by the literal repetition of text and content, but by a metamorphosis into a different setting which captures the essence of the book. Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* was conveyed not in any filmed rendition of the book, but in Godard's *La Chinoise*, where the French students, mouthing the revolutionary rhetoric and the innocent catechism of destruction which heralds the Cultural Revolution before it arrives, give one vividly the sense of Dostoevsky's meanings and intentions. In a similar sense, *Reds*, Part I, is *Madame Bovary*, in which the charades of Emma/Louise, played out in the widening gyre of the feminist ambition to break out of the encorseted self, provide a fulgid depiction of the phenomenon known as *bovaryisme*.

By the turn of the century, *bovaryisme* was a cultural malady that had colored the sentimental imagination. In Spanish and Portuguese novels, love-sick girls, having read *Madame Bovary*, wait anxiously for life to realize art (through the double medium of their own fevered novelistic longings); for some lovers to come and rescue them from their own pallid existence. In Portland, Oregon, Louise Bryant, married to a dull upper-middle-class dentist, sends her passionate poetry and sketches to *Blast*, an anarchist weekly edited by Alexander Berkman; lists herself in the city directory as an editor and artist; and pants to join The Rebellion, the term which the Young Intellectuals and the Free Spirits in Greenwich Village were flaunting to describe their emancipation from Puritan repression.

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Greenwich Village was then abuzz with Bergson and Freud. A doctrine called the Life Force (derived in some mysterious way from the assertions of Hugo de Vries, that evolutionary change occurred not in tiny, gradual steps, but in leaps) spurred a belief in Vitalism. One had to be psychoanalyzed, Floyd Dell explained, to "unravel one's complexes," and achieve instinctual self-expression. Emma Goldman, who called her magazine *Mother Earth*, lectured boldly on such topics as "The Intermediate Sex (A Study of Homosexuality)," and "Is Man a Varietist or Monogamist?" When several thousand Paterson strikers marched from the Jersey ferries to Madison Square Garden, with red banners flying and the I.W.W. band playing the Marseillaise, Mabel Dodge, at whose salon this pageant had been conceived by John Reed, remarked: "One of the gayest touches, I think, was teaching them to sing one of their lawless songs to the tune of 'Harvard, Old Harvard.' "

John Reed, as one of the editors of the *Masses*, was at the center of this world. "Long before they met," as Reed's biographer Robert A. Rosenstone writes, "Louise was familiar enough with Reed's reputation to weave fantasies about this local rebel whose stage was the world. He seemed a heroic figure whose life bristled with excitement, a man 'who wouldn't care what hour you went to bed or what hour you got up.'"

The film captures all this brilliantly. In their first encounter, Louise goes nattering through the night on culture and politics, while Jack shifts impatiently, wanting to take her to bed, but walled off by her talk. The next night, after they leave a formal dinner party (in the first scene, cleverly, she is dressed casually, in this one she is elaborately attired), she says to him abruptly, "I'd like to see how you look with your trousers off," and they sink to the ground in a clinch. The next step is inevitable: Louise leaves the provinces with Jack and goes to the Village.

In the Village, Louise angrily wants to be accepted on her own, as a writer, but she senses that she does not have the talent and is tolerated only as Reed's girl. She sulks at the thought that Reed might be "unfaithful" to her, but ensnares Eugene O'Neill in Provincetown (where she proves a mediocre actress and a portentous play of hers is staged, *The Game*, a symbolic drama whose characters are Life and Death, Youth and a Girl), in order to assert her own freedom—and jealousy.

Reds, Part I, captures this surface in a rutilant glow, the more so since Diane Keaton is as much Emma as Louise, a hoydenish quick-

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silver temperament, alternately kittenish and pettish, acting out the bright book of life in the sandbox of sex. In the climactic scene in Russia, Jack and Louise are in bed, making love (just as in Flaubert's assemblage of noises at the livestock show, where Rodolphe's Chateaubriandesque phrases and Emma's whisperings of love are combined with the bellowing of the cattle), coming to a final, heaving orgasm amidst the crashing chords of the "Internationale." Curtain, Part I.

If Part I is derived from a novel and expresses the spirit of its age, Part II is History, but history as a twice-told little red fairy tale. Except for the refractions from Eisenstein (in sepia) and David Lean's *Doctor Zhivago* (in color), what is the untutored viewer (and Ronald Reagan, who saw it on a Saturday afternoon) to make of this maelstrom? There are sectarian debates whether to split the Socialist party, or immediately form a new Communist party. And two are formed. Reed argues in Moscow against working within the A.F. of L. and for supporting the I.W.W., but is overruled. When he sulks, he is told by a stern Zinoviev that he has to learn to be a Bolshevik. At Baku, he declares that the workers must support a class war, and grins at the roar of applause, but becomes angry when he finds that the corrupt Zinoviev had ordered the phrase translated for the Moslem audience as a "holy war." On the return train the Commissars are already gorging themselves on fine food and wine; they cower when attacked, but Reed, on foot, chases after the Red caissons pursuing a White brigade, his lungs bursting, the tears streaming down his face, as if to say that the express train of History is rolling too fast for him. Louise, meanwhile (in a fictional scene), treads across the northern tundra, like little Eva on the ice floes, expressing her determination to join the Revolution and to demonstrate her true love for Jack. By desperate chance she meets him at the railway station. (Can there be a Russian film without a railway scene?) But he is already fatally ill. In the hospital, wearing a proletarian babushka on her head, she holds the dying Reed in her arms. Curtain, Part II.

In Part I, we can readily understand Louise, for we have both the imaginative context of *bovaryisme* and its repetitions today. But lacking any historical knowledge of the socialist movement and the first years of revolution—and how many persons have that knowledge?—what is one to make of Part II? The only commentators are The Witnesses. These are aged individuals, unidentified by name but photographed as if by Richard Avedon (and all looking like a haggard Diana Vreeland in drag), who tell us by recollection what it

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was like in those days. The idea was a brilliant one. The Witnesses could have served as a Greek Chorus, establishing context, supplying facts, and passing judgment. Yet other than as curios and cameos of some few recognizable individuals, the device not only fails but misleads. There is Henry Miller, who knew nothing of the time, jeering at it all and mirthfully uttering the word "fuck" as if he were still trying to shock his audience. And there is Scott Nearing, caught in a sixty-year time warp, repeating the clichés of capitalist encirclement. Roger Baldwin provides some information about the Palmer Raids and the persecution of the Reds. And Hamilton Fish (grinning like a jowly Jack Dempsey) gleefully tells how the Red hunts all started. No one talks about the Soviet Union—or the fate of Zinoviev, shot after the first Moscow Trials in 1936—and one unidentified person, at the end, insists that Reed, despite some intimations, was not disillusioned with the Russian Revolution at his death. Even the year of Reed's death is never clearly stated. (He died on October 17, 1920. Six Comintern leaders, headed by Bukharin, gave funeral orations; Bukharin, too, was later executed, after the third Moscow trial.)

What does the film then add up to? This is ragtime for the epigones mourning the glorious days they never had, the nostalgia for an Arcadian past, the days of innocence and idealism, of an uncomplicated world. There is the hint of the possible clash between the Good Communist (Reed) and the Bad Wolf (Zinoviev). But when Emma Goldman at one point, in Russia, says to Reed that the Revolution is going the wrong way, beginning to use immoral means for its ends, Reed turns on her angrily and tells her that a revolution is not a doll's house, but the "real thing." And one waits, expectantly, for the phrase that one cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs, or a revolution without breaking heads.

This is a lingering part of our time, the erasure of history: the "romance" of American communism, by Vivian Gornick, the hymn to the purity of those who have not given up the faith; the muddleheadedness of the recent Writers' Congress with the numerous unpublished, "semiskilled intellectuals" asserting that the truth cannot be printed in this country because big business controls publishing; or the defiant defenses about the idealism of the Weather Underground and the desperate reasons for their turn to terrorism. Will we have a film about them? We did: one by Emile d'Antonio, which praised their revolutionary idealism and courage. But neither that film—nor *Reds*—ever confronts the corruption of romanticism which turns idealism into the justification for murder.

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Would Reed ever have become disillusioned? We don't know. The film leaves the question unanswered, as it was in fact. But neither does it provide the esthetic distance or historical evidence to let the audience judge—as a Greek Chorus might have done. Reed's careful biographer, Robert Rosenstone, in commenting on a previous biography by Granville Hicks (written when Hicks was still a Communist), remarks that it "overemphasizes the political side of a man who was not primarily a political creature." Theodore Draper, the most careful student of the Communist party, says that the evidence is inconclusive, but indicates what common sense could have made clear: "If there is no suggestion of a break with the Comintern in Reed's last writings, there is more than enough basis for a break sooner or later if Reed had persisted in his militant resistance."

Because the film lacks a knowledgeable Greek Chorus, one of the most fascinating threads in that history is never followed through—the subsequent history of Louis Fraina. In the film, Fraina is shown as Reed's competitor for leadership of the American Communist party and for approval by the Comintern. And that is all. Yet Fraina subsequently became the Comintern representative in Mexico, broke with the Party in 1922 not for ideological reasons but because of a failure of nerve, quietly returned to the United States, where, under the name of Lewis Corey, he became a leading theoretician of Marxism (though not a member of the Party) and, in the late 1930s, an opponent of the Party. He was also the first political economist to write of, and sketch the idea of, a "mixed economy," in a brilliant book published in 1942, entitled *The Unfinished Task*. Corey taught at Antioch for ten years and then, wanting to return to political activity, became the educational director of the A.F. of L. Meat Cutters, a union headed by a "Socialist" named Patrick Gorman whose most conspicuous socialism was a bust of Eugene Debs and three volumes of *Capital* that he kept on a shelf in his ornate Chicago office. In 1952, during the McCarthy period, Corey was suddenly ordered deported by the government on the ground that he had entered the country illegally, and because of his activity, testified to by the former Communist leader Benjamin Gitlow, in the Communist party in 1920. The valiant Socialist Patrick Gorman fired Corey from his job. Six months later, in 1953, Corey died of a cerebral hemorrhage, at the age of fifty-nine. Two months later, the government's decision to give Corey a valid visa to leave the country and return to become a citizen arrived at his house! And some years later, Michael Harrington's Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee gave Patrick Gorman a testimonial dinner honoring him for his

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"contributions" to socialism. But these are idiosyncratic episodes, and which of the Witnesses would have known about them?

What finally makes the film corrupt is that it perpetuates the "legend" of John Reed, the romantic revolutionary who supported a just cause and wrote a book that, like the imprinting of a grey gosling by a spurious mother, forever stamped an image onto History. Yet, lacking any distance or historical judgment, there was no one to raise the obvious question about the *chutzpah* of this callow man, lacking any knowledge of the working class or of history, playing with red fire and becoming a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International as the "representative" of the American working class. As Walter Lippmann, a classmate of Reed at Harvard, wrote of him in 1914:

> He assumed that all capitalists were fat, bald and unctuous, that reformers were cowardly or scheming, that all newspapers are corrupt. . . . He made an effort to believe that the working class is not composed of miners, plumbers and workingmen generally, but is a fine statuesque giant who stands on a high hill facing the sun. . . . He talked with intelligent tolerance about dynamite, and thought he saw an intimate connection between the cubists and the I.W.W. He even read a few pages of Bergson.

In the romantic world of John Reed, as it was and is for many innocents, the world was and is divided between Reds and Whites. But what of the many other shades of the spectrum? One can let some of these shades speak.

Reed's contribution to history was *Ten Days That Shook the World*, his eyewitness account (though he spoke no Russian and took many of his facts from what he was told or from next-day newspaper accounts) of the fall of the Kerensky government and the victory of the Bolsheviks. In that book Reed reports one of the most fateful phrases in revolutionary history, a phrase that might have been uttered at the first Revolution and is fated to be repeated endlessly, since History has no memory, at all revolutions. (Needless to say, no Witness ever quotes these words.)

It is the night of November 7th. The Congress of the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers' Deputies is opened in the great meeting hall of the Smolny Palace. The Mensheviks, led by Martov and Dan, warn that one party alone cannot seize power, otherwise the revolutionary democracy will collapse and civil war erupt. But the speakers are hooted down by soldiers who, brandishing their rifles, shout that power is only won at the Front and on the streets. Reed writes:

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> Then came Abramovitch for the *Bund*, the organ of the Jewish Social Democrats—his eyes snapping behind thick glasses, trembling with rage.
>
> What is taking place now in Petrograd is a monstrous calamity! . . . 'Our duty to the Russian proletariat doesn't permit us to remain here and be responsible for these crimes. Because the firing on the Winter palace doesn't cease, the Municipal Duma together with the Mensheviki and Socialist Revolutionaries, and the Executive Committee of the Peasants' Soviet, has decided to perish with the Provisional Government, and we are going with them! Unarmed we will expose our breasts to the machine guns of the Terrorists. . . . We invite all delegates to this Congress-----.' The rest was lost in a storm of hoots, menaces and curses which rose to a hellish pitch as fifty delegates got up and pushed their way out. . . .
>
> Kameniev jangled the bell, shouting, 'Keep your seats and we'll go on with our business!' And Trotsky, standing up with a pale, cruel face, letting out his rich voice in cool contempt, 'All these so-called Socialist compromisers, these frightened Mensheviki, Socialist Revolutionaries, *Bund*—let them go! They are just so much refuse which will be swept into the garbage-heap of history.'

The Greek Chorus does have the final word. First, the rectification of an historical mistake. It was not Raphael Abramovitch who made that speech, but Henryk Erlich, the leader of the Polish Jewish Socialist Bund. Abramovitch died peacefully in New York in 1963 (though his son Mark Rein was murdered by the G.P.U. in Spain in 1937). Henryk Erlich, together with the Polish Jewish trade union leader Victor Alter, was executed in the Lubyanka dungeons by Stalin, after the two had retreated into the Soviet Union following the partition of Poland during the Nazi-Soviet pact. For some years during the war, the socialist movements of the world demanded to know the fate of Erlich and Alter, and when Mrs. Roosevelt and Wendell Wilkie raised this question with Stalin they were blandly told that the two men were alive but lost somewhere in the confusion of refugee throngs in Siberia. Kamenev, who jangled the bell, was executed by Stalin in 1936, after the first Moscow trial. And Trotsky? Trotsky was murdered by a Stalinist agent, Jacques Mornard, in 1940, with an ice-axe driven into his brain. Mornard served more than twenty years in a Mexican jail without talking and, on his release, vanished into Czechoslovakia, and beyond.

These are the facts, not fables. And it all did happen, and not so long ago. The garbage-heap of history, however, is full of many other things.

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BOOKS

OBSESSED WITH THE FIFTIES

NAMING NAMES. By Victor S. Navasky. The Viking Press. $15.95.

Victor Navasky's *Naming Names* can be read with interest and even fascination as an ethnography of Hollywoood's "red subculture" at the time of the HUAC investigations and the blacklist. The subject is hardly a neglected one, but no one before Navasky has sought out and interviewed so many Hollywood ex-Communists including both those who "named names" to HUAC and those who suffered blacklisting from the original Hollywood Ten of 1947 through the 1950s. *Naming Names* contains a wealth of "thick description," for the author allows his subjects complete freedom to speak for themselves. The scope and authenticity of Navasky's reporting can be gauged from the fact that one need scarcely go beyond the evidence he himself presents to arrive at a view at variance with his own, one that rejects or contradicts many of the moral and political judgments he asserts or assumes in drawing up his roster of the just and the unjust.

Navasky chooses to define his book as a "moral detective story" rather than as history or ethnography. Hence his title and a foreword on the obloquy with which human beings have allegedly through the ages regarded "informers," replete with allusions to Judas Iscariot, the Book of Daniel, schoolchildren's abhorrence of tattletales and folk hatred of "stoolies" and "finks." Yet Navasky finally has to admit that it is impossible to separate the morality of informing from either the content of the information imparted or from the nature and aims of both the party whose secrets are revealed and the party receiving them. Since no moral issue survives independent of these considerations, the rhetoric about nobody loving an informer amounts to little more than mood music tipping us off as to which side we should take in the drama the author is about to unfold. Yet Navasky often overlooks his own concessions and adverts throughout the book to abstract disquisitions about the informer's betrayal of social trust and the bonds of community, buttressed with tidbits culled from prominent philosophers and social scientists.

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If informing is not immoral in itself and may even on occasion be a duty, why does Navasky think that the ex-Communists who cooperated with HUAC—"informers," as he labels them—did wrong and that most of them even "believed on some level that they were doing wrong"? Because, he contends, unlike "James Burnham, William F. Buckley, Jr., and some other conservative thinkers of the 1950s," they were under no illusions about the ignorance, political self-seeking, and fundamental unseriousness of the congressional investigators, nor about the utter irrelevance of Communists in the movie industry to any genuine concern over national security. Even if moved by such a concern, the Committee had no need to seek information from glamorous movie people in public hearings, for the Los Angeles police and the FBI already possessed full membership records of all Hollywood CP members for over a decade past. Thus the examination of witnesses and the demand that they name former or present Communists known to them served no purpose other than publicity and the imposition of a loyalty test or penitential ritual on those summoned before the Committee. Navasky applies the fitting phrase "degradation ceremony," borrowed from the sociologist Harold Garfinkel, to the whole rigmarole.

Whatever William F. Buckley, Jr. may have thought back in the 1950s, at a recent debate over the "McCarthy years" on a college campus he replied to a question about Navasky's book by stating his agreement with its thesis that it was "demeaning" to confront people with the dilemma of either supplying the names of onetime Communists already known to the questioners or pleading the Fifth Amendment and exposing themselves to stigma and loss of employment. Buckley, of all improbable people, in his youth a speechwriter for Joseph McCarthy himself and the author of a book praising the Senator, here put his finger with admirable precision on exactly what is most compelling in Navasky's characterization of the HUAC hearings. Be it noted, however, that this is an assessment of the Committee's performance rather than of the conduct of those who made the often painful decision to comply with its demand for names.

Navasky's main subject is the namers rather than HUAC, which has few, if any, defenders today, least of all of its Hollywood adventures. He condemns the namers for betraying, at least symbolically, their erstwhile comrades and for providing legitimacy to HUAC. This judgment obviously rests on both moral and

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political considerations, although Navasky chooses most of the time to accent the former.

The Hollywood blacklist doubtless lends itself to moral dramatization. But dramatization need not take the form of a stark morality play passing categorical sentence on the guilt or exemplary virtue of its central characters. More subtle, realistic, and compassionate judgments are possible, given the diversity of motives and personal situations of the men and women forced to run the gauntlet of the blacklist. Navasky reports just such a verdict by the late Dalton Trumbo, one of the Hollywood Ten, who asserted in 1970 that "the blacklist was a time of evil and no one on either side who survived it came through untouched." "Some," Trumbo continued, "suffered less than others, some grew and some diminished, but in the final tally we were *all* victims because almost without exception each of us felt compelled to say things he did not want to say, to do things he did not want to do, to deliver and receive wounds he truly did not want to exchange." Trumbo's attitude would seem to have stronger affinities with "the Judeo-Christian tradition" than the absolute rejection of informing ascribed to it by Navasky.

Yet Navasky himself unmistakably favors the "visceral outrage" still preserved after so many years by Albert Maltz, another member of the Hollywood Ten, whose disagreement with Trumbo emerged during Navasky's interviewing and provoked a lengthy correspondence that ended only with Trumbo's fatal illness. Maltz comes across in this exchange, aired and partly cited by Navasky, as a champion prig; another of Navasky's respondents describes him as an "injustice collector." He does not hesitate to compare the namers with informers in the French Resistance who were paid by the Gestapo. Maltz has the excuse of having suffered from the blacklist, but the same cannot be said of Navasky, who often employs the familiar rhetorical technique of suggesting such comparisons in the very act of denying their appropriateness, usually mentioning victims of the Nazis but referring a few times to Stalin's purges and forced confessions.

One senses a displacement of moral energy in the intense preoccupation of Maltz and other Navasky subjects with the nature and degree of guilt of the "informers," let alone with the burning issue of whether today the named should snub the namers when they run into each other in the expensive restaurants and resort hotels frequented by both. Base though HUAC may have been, the

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blacklist was, after all, instituted by the studios out of fear that the public would stay away from their movies already threatened with loss of patronage by the rise of television. At the time of the Hollywood Ten hearing in 1947, the movie industry, from its major owners and executives to such stars as Sinatra and Bogart, initially gave strong public support to those who defied the Committee, all of them Communists (though two were defecting). The studios backed off and blacklisted the Ten only after Congress cited them for contempt a month later. According to Trumbo, the Ten expected not only continuing support from the industry but vindication by the courts, which leads him to question that their stand was as heroic and principled as it was later made out to be. Four years later, when HUAC again turned its attention to Hollywood, the political climate was quite different: the United States was waging an undeclared war in Korea, American-Soviet relations were at their lowest ebb, and in Russia Stalin was planning a new purge with anti-Semitic overtones, while at home Senator McCarthy had become the feared voice of demagogic and indiscriminate harassment of suspected Communists and sympathizers. Contempt citations or blacklisting were virtual certainties for witnesses who remained silent before the Committee, although the industry was free to end the blacklist whenever it chose, as it finally did a few years later. In concentrating on the namers or even on HUAC, is there no moral indignation to be spared for the studio heads? The blacklist victims Navasky interviewed seem to have displayed little hesitation in flocking back to their highly paid jobs under the same old capitalist bosses though their brows may still furrow when they hear Elia Kazan's name and their eyes turn away from a few elderly fellow-employees encountered on the beach at Acapulco.

In the opening section of the book, Navasky locates the Hollywood story in the larger historical context of the Cold War, Soviet espionage in the United States, Republican efforts to discredit the New Deal, and "the war between the liberals" pitting anti-Communists against "those who called themselves progressives." Even if one didn't know that Navasky was editor of the *Nation*, one would have to be very obtuse not to detect his "revisionist" view of these events. However, he makes an obvious effort to avoid extreme tendentiousness, although he expresses doubts about the guilt of Hiss and the Rosenbergs and thinks that American commitment to the ideology of capitalism contributed to the Cold War. Several factual errors confirm that Navasky himself is too young to

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remember directly the period. His account is at best perfunctory, like that of a lawyer (which he is by training) conceding possible objections in order subsequently to ignore them. He at one point simply reproduces verbatim several sentences of my own from a critical review of another recent retrospective on McCarthyism; there I listed Stalin's actions in Europe of 1948 and 1949 as causes of the rising anti-Communist mood in the United States, which was exploited by domestic Communist hunters.

Navasky's major political purpose, to which his moralizing about the evils of informing is ultimately subordinated, is to use his Hollywood research to mount a new campaign against the anti-Communist liberals, producing yet another "1970s rerun of the 1950s." HUAC has long since been abolished, the American CP reduced to a small, declining political sect, and in Hollywood the blacklist victims have been celebrated as heroes while "the stigmatizers became the stigmatized." But the anti-Communist liberals of the 1950s remain today respected and influential figures in the cultural and political worlds, quick to strike back vigorously and unapologetically when attacked by people like Lillian Hellman, a Navasky heroine who bridges the Hollywood and New York scenes. Moreover, most of them remain liberals instead of showing what Navasky regards as their true colors by joining the neo-conservatives. His particular targets are James Wechsler, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., the *New York Times*, and various liberal organizations, including ADA and the now-defunct American Committee on Cultural Freedom. He blames them for failing to defend Communists *qua* Communists, as opposed to those falsely accused of Communist affiliations or sympathies. In the case of Wechsler, once a member of the Young Communist League, he blames them for having "named names" to the McCarthy subcommittee even though Wechsler made it plain that his reason for doing so was to deprive McCarthy of the chance to discredit his energetic and effective opposition to the Senator as a leading newspaper editor.

Wisely, Navasky segregates his absorbing Hollywood material, comprising nearly three-quarters of the book, between his opening historical context chapters and a closing section entitled "Lessons" that praises the morality of the silent witnesses and polemicizes against the anti-Communist liberals. Unlike Lillian Hellman in *Scoundrel Time*, Navasky at least tries to confront the arguments of the anti-Stalinists rather than merely slandering them. Observing

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that the renewal in the 1970s of controversy over political stands taken thirty years ago reveals "how deep were the divisions that beset the liberal community," he nevertheless fails to note that the side that was on the defensive in the 1950s chose to renew the battle, taking advantage of the revival of radicalism and opposition to American foreign policy in the wake of Vietnam. Hellman initiated her publicized fights with Wechsler, Diana Trilling, and Mary McCarthy, and no one is writing books or making movies critical of the Hollywood Communists.

The most important argument bearing on the specific issue of naming names is the "question of candor," taken up in the very last chapter. Navasky wants us to honor the moral courage of people who remained silent in order to avoid legal penalties when questioned by a tribunal of our major elected assembly about their past or present membership in a political party which demanded of its members unqualified support of a foreign dictatorship threatening independent and democratic nations abroad. Unquestionably, many of these witnesses chose not to talk because informing was morally repellent to them and others refused because they rejected the "unjust authority" of the tribunal, anticipating the Supreme Court judgment that curbed such inquiries a few years later. But some remained silent because they had previously lied to other agencies and feared the truth would expose them to perjury indictments. There were witnesses who declined to testify in response to pressures from spouses, friends, and coworkers, just as some of the namers gave in to like pressures to do the opposite. And some, especially among the Hollywood Ten, were obeying not their consciences but Communist party orders directing members never to admit to membership. Navasky's own account reveals the presence of all of these motives. His conclusion that the mute witnesses are "moral exemplars" of the lesson "that one must abide by one's code" is simply not warranted by his evidence.

Naming Names ends with a major offensive against the liberal anti-Communists, complaining that when accused of moral dereliction for "abandoning" Communist victims of McCarthyism, "they prefer to change the subject to Stalin." "Who, then, lacks candor?" Navasky ripostes. The feeble *tu quoque* character of this sally will not be lost on anyone who remembers ever having tried to persuade even the mildest fellow-traveler of the reality, let alone the enormity, of Stalin's crimes. But Navasky is too young to recall that debate, and his question, as the tense indicates, is addressed to the response of anti-Communist liberals *today* to the reproach that they did not

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"support" over a quarter of a century ago people like the Hollywood Ten and Hellman, who were at the time both Stalinists and targets of red-hunting politicians.

Navasky reports Albert Maltz's rejection of Hellman's claim that she stood "alone against the McCarthyite crowd, when in fact she was a private in a virtual army of resisters." Quite so, and the largest and noisiest battalions were led by Communists and well-known fellow-travelers, virtually until news of Khrushchev's secret speech decimated the Party itself, by which time McCarthyism was also waning. A liberal or social democrat who thought the CP never posed a clear and present danger to the country, who hated McCarthyism for undermining civil liberties, but who also hated and feared Stalin's growing domination of Eastern Europe and his efforts to extend it by force westward and in Korea, and who supported the Marshall Plan and the containment policy, was hardly a welcome recruit to this army of resisters. These views *defined* an anti-Communist liberal at the time. Even groups organized by non-Communists, such as the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee (praised by Navasky for having "refused to advertise their reservations about Communism"), identified the enemy simply as "anti-Communism," as I well recall from attendance at the ECLC's organizing conference held in Princeton.

Navasky maintains that the small group associated with *Dissent* was isolated and exceptional in outspokenly condemning both Stalinism and McCarthyism, overlooking that the degree to which McCarthyism presented a threat to freedom and how best to oppose it were subjects of bitter controversy within the entire anti-Communist liberal intellectual community. Those few intellectuals who supported the Senator removed themselves from that community and those who declined to take him seriously were a small, much-criticized minority within it. Even the ACCF, which had actually been created to counter Communist mobilization of artists and intellectuals in support of the pro-Soviet Stockholm Peace Petition, was riven with discord over the McCarthyism issue. I attended as a guest a private ACCF meeting at which, it so happened, the topic of discussion was the blacklist in the entertainment industry. No one defended it: there was vehement argument against the view put forward by a few people that the public had a *right to know* if the entertainers it patronized were supporters of the enemy in the Korean war. ACCF membership was broadly based, including figures like Kennan, Galbraith, and Oppenheimer, but the group's executive staff remained much more

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inclined than the membership at large to minimize McCarthyism as a menace to cultural freedom. I declined an invitation to join for just this reason, and resignations and continuing internal conflicts ultimately destroyed the organization.

In praising his silent victims, Navasky forgets that Wechsler, the ADA, and other liberal organizations were not hacks turning out the mediocre goods of the entertainment business, nor, for that matter, scholars working in the academic vineyard, but major *political* actors committed to front-line battle with the McCarthyite men of ill will. Rather larger issues were at stake for them than salving their individual consciences. If McCarthyism truly was, as Navasky evidently believes, a powerful near-fascist challenge to American democracy, then someone had to fight it politically. Its liberal opponents who were free of all illusions about Communism made a major contribution to its defeat and later, in court actions and policy reversals under the Kennedy administration, to the abolition of its practices that had been institutionalized in statutes and government policies. It was not the John Howard Lawsons and Lester Coles, nor even the Arthur Millers and Lillian Hellmans, who finally slew the dragon.

Navasky actually seems to think that anti-Communist liberals should have surrendered, or at least shut up about, their anti-Communist convictions. He wants to revise Voltaire's famous libertarian statement by denying to the defender of someone's legal right to free speech his or her moral right to disagree at the same time with what is being said. Navasky is at least consistent. Since the publication of *Naming Names*, he has defended the First Amendment rights of a contemporary group of name namers, ex-CIA agents, arguing that the true civil libertarian must suppress any disapproval of the consequence that publishing the names and addresses of agents still on duty may lead to their murder by terrorists. Not all informing, it seems, requires moral condemnation.

Navasky is fully aware that American Communists were no upholders of civil liberties, noting that they favored prosecution under the Smith Act of Trotskyists and native fascists even after their own leaders had been indicted under that statute. He also knows that the CP was an internally repressive organization, although he fails to see the often lasting effects of this on its members, including some among both the namers and the named. Whatever it may have owed to the "paranoid style" of nativist and right-wing populism, McCarthyism borrowed much of its

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melodramatic vision of a world of "dupes," "lackeys," "dangerous thinkers," and "hidden conspiracies" from the Communist party itself, a vision transmitted to ignorant and unscrupulous mainstream politicians by ex-Communist paid informers whose outlook and vocabulary had been shaped in the Party. Navasky attributes the Party's "fortress mentality" to defensive reactions against the red hunt, but we know from historical scholarship and the memoirs of former Communists that the mentality predated the red hunt by several years, having begun to crystallize before the end of the war at the time of the Duclos letter and Browder's deposition.

Navasky of course is right that America in the 1950s was not in a state of "national emergency." But the same can hardly be said of Europe or the Far East, where the United States was trying to prevent further gains by the Soviet Union. McCarthyism was founded on the false conflation of the internal and external threats posed by communism, which also explains why it lasted longer than similar periods of repression in the past. Politicians took advantage of the world situation to pose as ardent patriots by pillorying domestic Communists and trying to link their own partisan opponents to the Soviet Union; the conversion of a foreign policy issue into a bogus domestic one was especially attractive to old isolationists and new Asia-Firsters uneasy about the extension of American commitments overseas to contain Soviet communism.

Navasky rejects the concept of "totalitarianism," favored by anti-Communist intellectuals, for blurring the distinction between communism and fascism, a theme still capable of arousing impassioned debate as the exchanges this winter over Susan Sontag's speech on Poland revealed. According to Navasky, "Marxists identified with the weak and spoke the language of social justice," whereas fascists openly worshipped violence and minority rule. The loftiness of its professed ideals used to be the last-ditch defense of people reluctant to surrender a lingering sympathy for the Soviet Union. One might argue that the corruption of an ideal, and worse, its manipulative invocation to conceal sinister aims, is no less morally culpable and is far more insidious than the blunt disavowal of any humane principles. And the HUAC Congressmen also professed to serve the "noble ideals" of the American founding fathers. Yet Navasky's point has a limited validity if strictly confined to the difference between communist and fascist sympathizers in the West and not invoked to temper opposition to Stalinism or to less murderous but no less totalitarian Communist dictatorships in other

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countries (such as Poland). Some latter-day anti-Communists, notably among the neoconservatives, equate communist and fascist sympathizers much too facilely and automatically. In the past, anti-Stalinist leftists did not simply shun and denounce the former: they sought to argue with them, shoved books by Trotsky, Koestler, or Orwell at them, and generally regarded them as deluded rather than as wicked beyond redemption. They did not treat Nazi sympathizers in the same way—or wouldn't have in the unlikely event of their ever having met any. The history of communism in the West, almost since 1917, has been that those initially drawn by its proclaimed ideals have eventually "had their Kronstadt" and abandoned their illusions, even veteran party members long insulated from reality. No such periodic mass defections mark the history of Nazi and fascist movements.

Although Navasky gives full moral credit to the idealism that his "resisters" to HUAC claim attracted them to the CP and kept them loyal to it for so long, he refuses to see that the blindness and fraudulence of this idealism were precisely what induced shock and disgust on the part of those who saw through it. Liberal-left anti-Communism was rooted in a profound moral reaction against both the crimes of Stalinism and the refusal of its apologists to acknowledge them, a reaction that was usually highly unpopular in the circles to which left anti-Communists continued to belong. Navasky's interview with Budd Schulberg, the longest in the book, presents an eloquent and passionate expression of this outlook. Schulberg became a Communist at a very early age when the Party was first organized in Hollywood. As an aspiring writer, he attended a writers' congress in the Soviet Union in the early thirties. After leaving the Party a few years later, he found out that the organizer who had recruited him had been shot by the Stalinists in Spain and that most of the writers he had met, including Babel and Pilniak, had disappeared during the Great Terror. ("I told Lillian [Hellman], 'Better writers than you or me have been killed.' She said, 'Prove it.' ") Navasky confines himself to expressing skepticism about the motives Schulberg says led him to cooperate with HUAC. A conclusive indication of Navasky's indifference to the moral indignation animating anti-Communists is his readiness to publish in the journal he edits a few septuagenarians who are *still* Communists after all these years—and as experts on Soviet affairs no less!

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Not content to claim that the liberal opponents of McCarthyism were compromised by accepting in practice some of its premises, Navasky will not even grant the genuineness of their anti-Communism. They were, he contends, in the "dissociating business," rejecting the Stalinists at best in order "to preserve the future of liberalism," at worst to protect themselves. Yet one need not have been a Communist, let alone shared Schulberg's degree of involvement, to have felt intense moral revulsion from Stalinism. Even for someone like myself who mostly came into contact only with fellow-travelers in or near the academic world, it was a sobering experience to discover that these people of an almost suffocating self-righteousness, who constantly preened themselves on the elevation of their "social conscience" and denigrated as cowards or knaves all who did not share their allegiances, were lauding a regime that had imprisoned and killed many millions more innocent people even than Hitler's, including foreign believers who had made sacrifices to support it.

Navasky has no personal past to vindicate; to him, the old conflict over Stalinism is fraught with contemporary political meaning and lessons for the future. Some reviewers have read *Naming Names* as a warning against the imminence of a new McCarthyism ready to assault the left and civil liberties in a period of domestic conservatism and renewal of the Cold War. But this is, I think, at most a minor concern: recently, Navasky tried to dispel the anxieties of some of his contributors to the *Nation* by sensibly reminding them of the vast difference between the state of the country today and in the 1950s. His deeper political aim is to restore the moral credentials of "the Left" by discrediting its most serious and principled intellectual critics while affirming the essential rectitude of those who paid for their political errors thirty years ago. Conor Cruise O'Brien once wrote of Orwell that "the cant of the left . . . was almost destroyed by Orwell's attacks, which put out of action so much cant-producing in its factories: the minds of left-wing intellectuals." Navasky wants to write off the bad investments of the past, evict the occupants who hold a partial lien on the premises, and start the machinery whirring again.

If complicity with Stalinism had been an isolated occurrence, a bizarre intrusion of the darkness of Russian despotism into the restless lives of overprotected Western intellectuals, the idea of *pas d'ennemis à gauche* might regain some plausibility. But the radicalism

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of the 1960s disabused us of this prospect by repeating the earlier, more painful experience in diluted form in relation to other communist tyrannies. Many left-wing intellectuals now seem incurably prone to a "back to the old drawing board" attitude when political myths they fervently embraced only yesterday are exposed as evil illusions, an attitude which prevents them from learning anything or even from undergoing the pain of real disillusionment. The ideals of progressivism themselves appear to encourage persistent self-deception, or, at a deeper level, the flaw perhaps lies in the compulsion to tie one's most cherished sense of personal identity to an exalted political commitment.

DENNIS H. WRONG

BLOCKING IT OUT

THE TERRIBLE SECRET. By Walter Laqueur. Penguin $14.95.

AUSCHWITZ AND THE ALLIES. By Martin Gilbert. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. $15.00.

THE HOLOCAUST AND THE HISTORIANS. By Lucy Dawidowicz. Harvard University Press. $15.00.

The three books under review here have a main theme in common: the attitudes and responses of Europeans and Americans to the destruction of European Jewry by the Nazis. Walter Laqueur tells us how much was known and how soon, Martin Gilbert shows how little was done to interfere with the process of extermination, and Lucy Dawidowicz offers a bleak picture of subsequent historiography. Today one cannot but agree with the essential idea of these three studies; however, its discussion leaves serious questions unresolved.

In *The Holocaust and the Historians*, Lucy Dawidowicz sets out to describe the insufficiencies and distortions of American, British, German, Russian, and Polish historiography dealing with (or omitting) the extermination of the Jews; for good measure, she adds to it the weaknesses of "Jewish" historiography as well. The two most convincing chapters are those dealing with Soviet and Polish histori-

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ography. Dawidowicz presents a revolting picture of systematic omissions, gross distortions, and plain lies, in line with what is known about the official attitudes of both countries towards Jews, Zionism, and, as far as Soviet Russia is concerned, the embarrassment of historians concerning some aspects of the general history of the war. In both countries, history and political propaganda are one and the same: "Not without the help of the leaders of Zionism," writes some Soviet scribbler, "did hundreds of thousands of ordinary Jews meet their death in the gas chambers." There is nothing to add to that.

But, when Dawidowicz leaves the rather obvious domain of communist historiography, she gets into difficulties. Had she wanted to show that postwar Western historiography is unable to integrate the extermination of the Jews of Europe into a coherent interpretation of the epoch, she would easily have proven her case; had she wished to say that the Holocaust may be inaccessible to historical understanding, leaving us deeply uneasy with most existing studies, many of us would have agreed. But her point seems to be that the subject as such is either entirely neglected or mishandled, which is, at best, an extreme overstatement of the case. Let us take German historiography as an example.

According to Dawidowicz, the major German historical studies of Nazism simply avoid the Holocaust or completely minimize it. Indeed, as she shows, neither Friedrich Meinecke, nor Gerhard Ritter, nor Hans Rothfels, all of whom took on the problematic heritage of German historiography after the war, gave any significant place to the destruction of the Jews in their interpretation of the "German catastrophe," a catastrophe that some tried, as well as they could, to isolate from the main trends of German history. One redeeming exception, for Dawidowicz, is Karl Dietrich Bracher's *German Dictatorship* (1969), but that is the only one. Nothing is mentioned after that, with the exception of a concluding footnote: "Since the publication of *Die deutsche Diktatur*, some German historians have undertaken to write about Jews in Germany (e.g. Reinhard Rürup) and about anti-Semitism (e.g. Thomas Nipperdey)." This is a rather one-sided picture of the scene.

Dawidowicz could have made a stronger case for constant German minimization of the extermination of the Jews by mentioning various popular biographies of Hitler, the current exertions of neo-Marxist historians, the obfuscations of exponents of a "structural-functional" interpretation of Nazism, etc. But, on the

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other hand, no serious summary of German historiography on the Third Reich and the Jews can avoid mentioning studies such as those of Wolfgang Schaeffler, Heinz Buchheim and Helmut Krausnick, Uwe Dietrich Adam, and others. Moreover, important works on Nazi ideology, like Ernst Nolte's *The Three Faces of Fascism*, gave a central place to Nazi anti-Semitism and Nazi policies towards the Jews (whether one agrees with Nolte's theories or not). The most important German quarterly in contemporary history, the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, regularly publishes studies about Nazi policies towards the Jews; tens of monographs on the subject appear every year, as well as a series of volumes on the history of German Jewry, published by the Leo Baeck Institute. Taking the Leo Baeck publications as an example, Dawidowicz could answer that this is Jewish, not German, historiography, which brings me to another major problem in her study.

Jewish historians are mentioned as part of Polish historiography, but the most important among them disappear from American and British historiography, with the exception of some fleeting references (a particularly fleeting and prejudiced one is made to Raul Hilberg's classic work, *The Destruction of the European Jews*). In her chapter on "The Holocaust in Jewish History" Dawidowicz expresses doubt that Holocaust survivors can be objective historians, but then goes out of her way to praise the work of two such survivors, Philip Friedman and Isaiah Trunk. All in all, even if the general thesis of the book is acceptable, the presentation of the case lacks method and cogency.

Walter Laqueur's *The Terrible Secret* and Martin Gilbert's *Auschwitz and the Allies* tell stories already known in their main outline, but they perform an essential service by bringing together a great amount of information not yet presented in a systematic way and, in Gilbert's case, by completing it with impressive new archive material. Thanks to Laqueur, we now know with certainty that, as early as the end of 1942, a great amount of precise information concerning the fate of European Jews was available to Allies and Neutrals, as well as to the populations of Germany and of occupied Europe and to the Jews in and out of Europe. And, thanks to Gilbert, we know how precise was the information about Auschwitz, both in London and in Washington, by the early summer of 1944, and that nothing was attempted in terms of intervention and rescue. (In fact, since the publication, a few months ago, of the second volume of the official history of *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, we know even more than Laqueur and Gilbert tell us.) It appears that, by decoding

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messages sent by police officers attached to the *Einsatzgruppen* in Russia during the summer of 1941 and based at concentration and extermination camps between the spring of 1942 and February 1943, London was informed of the daily rate of killings in Russia and in the camps. (The daily camp reports gave the number of inmates at the start of each previous day, the new arrivals, the "departures" by any means, and the number of inmates at the end of the previous day.) But, whatever the amount of new information, the main problem remains one of interpretation.

The Terrible Secret bears as subtitle *An Investigation into the Suppression of Information about Hitler's "Final Solution."* This can be understood in two ways: either as voluntary suppression of information, or as an inability to guess the meaning of the information and hence its involuntary suppression. The essential point made by Laqueur is that, in fact, little information was voluntarily suppressed ("There was no deliberate attempt to stop the flow of information on the mass killings, except for a while on the part of officials in the State Department") and that the lack of response stemmed in part from lack of interest, in part from disbelief (among non-Jews and Jews alike). "This disbelief," writes Laqueur, "can be explained against the background of Anglo-American lack of knowledge of European affairs in general and Nazism in particular. . . ." And further: "The fact that millions were killed was more or less meaningless. . . . The statistics of murder were either disbelieved or dismissed from consciousness. . . . Thus the news about the murder of many millions of Jews was not accepted for a long time and even when it had been accepted the full implications were not understood. . . ."

Walter Laqueur's interpretation is quite convincing, but it gives rise to a major dilemma. In the introduction to his study, Laqueur writes, "When all allowances have been made, when all mitigating circumstances have been accorded, it is still true that few come out of the story unblemished. . . ." There is an obvious discrepancy between lack of comprehension, disbelief, involuntary suppression of information because of its apparent "meaninglessness" on the one hand and, on the other, the moral judgment implied in Laqueur's statement. This is a contradiction that Laqueur's study cannot resolve, the dilemma of our whole approach to the attitudes of the "onlookers," a dilemma that has no real answer.

The dilemma becomes more extreme as we approach the end of the war. It seems difficult indeed to speak of "disbelief" and "incomprehension" as we reach mid-1944, the crucial part of Martin Gilbert's story. Both the British and the Americans are asked to

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bomb Auschwitz, or the railway lines leading to the camp and carrying, from the spring of that year, hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews to the gas chambers. "At the time of the request," writes Gilbert, "the American government possessed a great deal of information about Auschwitz, including both its location and its function together with the technical ability to bomb both the railway lines leading to the camp and the gas chambers in the camp itself." As we have seen, the British were informed about the nature of Auschwitz from the very beginning of its operations, in 1942. Neither the Americans nor the British responded to the requests. And, again, the explanation given us by Martin Gilbert is not basically different from the one offered by Laqueur: "In part," writes Gilbert, "the story of the negative Allied response to many of the Jewish appeals for help was one of lack of comprehension and imagination, in the face of the 'unbelievable'. Many Jews likewise found the scale of the slaughter difficult to guess. . . ." This is only part of the story, though, as shown, for instance, in the case of Winston Churchill.

One man, writes Gilbert, who did understand the enormity of the crimes was Churchill, who wrote to Anthony Eden in July 1944: "There is no doubt that this is probably the greatest and most terrible single crime even committed in the whole history of the world." But then, as Gilbert adds, "in the making of Allied policy, Churchill was not the final arbiter, and in many cases, not least among them the bombing of Auschwitz, other voices and other considerations prevailed".

Gilbert's study indeed shows how the lower ministerial level and the military and civilian bureaucracies neutralized Churchill's proddings on this issue. But, one wonders nonetheless: the decision wasn't of any crucial importance for the Allies; all in all, it had to do with a routine bombing operation over targets amply identified, on a route followed many times by British and American aircraft, at a location no more than two or three miles from sites attacked several times. Couldn't Churchill have imposed such a "minor" decision, if the whole issue had any real place in his thinking? It seems that, as we approach the end of the war, the issue isn't "disbelief" anymore, but plain lack of interest in the fate of European Jews.

If Lucy Dawidowicz had covered all the ground she set out to deal with, she would have mentioned the article published in 1977 by the German historian Martin Broszat on "The Genesis of the Final Solution." Broszat's thesis is that there was no preestablished plan and no single decision to exterminate all the Jews of Europe, but

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that, towards the end of 1941, the Nazis more or less stumbled into global extermination. Haphazard decisions on the part of the exterminators, disbelief and lack of interest on the part of the onlookers, disbelief and impotence on the part of the victims and of Jews living outside of Europe: Could this be the explanation of "the most terrible single crime ever committed in the whole history of the world"?

SAUL FRIEDLANDER

THE HERO WHO FAILED

THE VERY RICH HOURS OF COUNT VON STAUFFENBERG. By Paul West. Harper and Row. $12.95.

While science fiction fascinates with its cool dream of scrupulously invented technologies, historical fiction encourages false wonder—"So *that's* how it really was!" or, worse, "So that's how it *really* was!" Inventing or discovering mechanical details of name, date, and artifact, authors of both kinds of fiction are trapped in conjugations of *to be*—past or future—yet unable to offer much *being*, only the *res* at the root of a bogus reality.

The problem for the writer of genuinely historical fiction, then, is to devise thoughts, feelings, and gestures for his characters so that the unity of known action hums simultaneously with human consciousness sensing itself and its society. We want a tuning fork that sounds the accurate tone, yes; but we want that note of seemingly inconsequent vibration too, knowing that one literally produces the other. This problem is realized by the hero of Paul West's *The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg*, a fictional history about a man who attempted, and failed, to assassinate Hitler. The novel is narrated with luminescent sensibility, both writer's and hero's:

> Was it during these awful, frustrating weeks that I first developed the notion that this was all my life was going to be? These would be the friends I made, these would be the only enterprises. It felt reassuring to have things so fixed, but demoralizing to know that all those possible other lives one dallies with, and saves up for

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> next year or the year after that, were never going to be. The so-called joys of anticipation became crystal ciphers, more relevant to someone as yet unborn than to myself, and with that began my extraordinary sense of having been dispossessed of my future. Not quite an automaton, I nonetheless felt more abstract than any person should. And in the long run I knew only that the name Stauffenberg stood for a certain line of force, a pressure exerted, a will gone rigid as wood. Again and again, I wanted to do something irrelevant, something that had nothing to do with S'gruber [Hitler]. What a good time, I thought, to begin a stamp collection, or to become an authority on index fingers; but such folderol was out of the question.

No more than Stauffenberg does West go in for folderol, but neither is he dispossessed by Stauffenberg's mere history, already delivered by authors cited in the novel's "Preliminary." Instead, West dilates Stauffenberg's fame, which has been sharp precisely in its thinness—like a knife blade. Ironically, as I read the novel on a train, one survivor of a concentration camp interrupted to insist that Stauffenberg had been the *only* man who made an attempt on Hitler's life. Such all-too-typical, reductive praise, aside from its understandable inaccuracy, only emphasizes the character's lament: "It would all have been so different if I'd entered history as the man who killed Hitler: the one man, the only." But no, this man, whose youth was hailed by Rilke and whose maturity knew the friendship of Stefan George, was doomed to enter history as the man who *tried* to kill Hitler. West, however, recovers the richness of Stauffenberg's life by undoing the abstraction, by introducing that rigid "line of force" into a complex, varied field. In his *Book of Hours*, Rilke's character asserts what Stauffenberg accomplishes through West's "historical impersonation":

> Mein Leben ist nicht diese steile Stunde,
> darin du mich so eilen siehst.
> Ich bin ein Baum vor meinem Hintergrunde. . . .
>
> My life is not this swift hour
> through which you see me speed.
> I am a tree in front of my background. . . .

Never subordinated to character, the novel's adventure properly arises from that character, which was developed aristocratically "with a responsibility to care for others," but with training that

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"hadn't prepared me for such an eventuality." Consequently, the historic action, as West says, is "ventriloquially transfigured": not as we perceive it objectively, but as Stauffenberg might have seen and said it. The daring of this transformation mounts in the last hundred pages of the book when, after his execution, Stauffenberg continues to narrate and comes to know that his "poorest hours—of glory and of fame, of disgrace and pain—belong to others"—his accomplices, "whose lives I stole and brutally cut off." He also realizes: "I had set off my bomb in the dead center of my own family, slaughtering and jeopardizing them in the interests of their own future."

The conflicting realities—historical and fictional, in their narrowest definitions—are the subject of Stauffenberg's contemplation at the novel's end, when a group of students visits the military office building where he lived his last hours on the street now named for him:

> Out go the students, disappointed, into the street I haunt. "He was only in his forties," babbles one, having read something somewhere. I was not even thirty-seven. Away they go. These too are among the deaths a hero dies. There is nothing to *see*, whereas over at Plotzensee the death shed stands, a shrine, near which the bereaved gather once a year on simple chairs to dream the heroic agony all anew.

What the students have not seen, what the plaque commemorating the place where he and some of his coconspirators were shot cannot commemorate, is precisely what Paul West shows. In these last hours, a man's botched action expresses a triumph of being. Of course that other commemoration is here too, and its excitement will, quite likely, attract and hold most of the book's readers. In the attested historicity of West's narrative, we review the compounding sensibility of a professional soldier, who "never, never wanted to see Germany defeated," as he learns to hate Hitler, then learns "not to keep that hatred in a vacuum, but to mobilize it, use it." And in this portrayal we witness both the incitements of the count's Uncle Nux, a kind of prime mover to the young nobleman in his deadly work, and a turning point when his brother Berthold reveals bodies of dismembered Jewesses floating in lurid vats—the subject of Nazi "anatomical" studies—as well as the two times that Stauffenberg carries his bomb to Hitler's headquarters before he finally sets it off in July 1944. With the pictorial impact of the finest books of hours, all is provided that any reader might want as sufficient cause in the

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career of this oddly inappropriate assassin who had lost not only an eye, but a hand and two fingers as well, in the African campaign. "A husk of a man had come to blow a windbag to bits," and that husk lives for us, as a dramatically imagined character should, not only in the form of his actions, but in the figures of his speech.

If Stauffenberg's fear is that "he has nowhere else to go, no one else to be, no other chance to set off a bomb," so that "the outcome was beginning to shrivel into permanent identity," then West's triumph is to open up that compressed wad of a man's life tossed in a single unsuccessful gesture and to spread its wrinkled picture before us. Stauffenberg's definition of himself has compacted him inhumanly; West's novel restores him to full humanity while it condemns, once again, the moral putridity of Nazism.

Necessarily, the book has two rhythms, two rhetorics. The first, in order and importance, is Stauffenberg's "solo" narrative. Civilized and sensitive, the count sounds like both a nobleman and a noble soul, a *mutilé de guerre*. The second narrative is snarled and raged by Roland Freisler, who mocks the justice he presides over as Hitler's appointed judge at the conspirators' trial. The preordained executions following these so-called trials were filmed and shown to cadet audiences in Berlin, but as Stauffenberg narrates:

> The effect on morale was so awful that all copies were eventually destroyed on S'gruber's and Goebbel's express command. Anyone who watched such an obscenity, for whatever reason, had become a half-accomplice, and was already halfway to the flank of S'gruber himself, alone in his private stench.

So savage is West's picture in this section that some readers will find it eclipsing earlier visions; some will recoil like the cadets. Such perverted burlesque almost makes accomplices of us too. West's Black-Mass trials merit comparison with Goya's "black" paintings. Seen through the humane prose of Stauffenberg, we need that sight in our lives, as Stauffenberg needed the sight of the dead Jewesses, framed in Berthold's careful presentation. We need, too, the ensuing lull and easing as the final pages of the book return Stauffenberg's sensibility to the foreground, and we realize how those nearly unendurable pages are not only the justification for but the prelude to "the richest hour of all . . . when Adolf Schicklgruber breathed his last." West's book of Stauffenberg's hours is a book of compassion; in the preliminary he cites *King Rene's Book of Love*, which also has its remarkable dark night illuminations. Stauffenberg's compassion

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grew huge enough to encompass a whole people without losing its base in a few; it became "something sacred that goes on, and on, despite the universal feast of death it flowers in."

Having resisted the temptation to write an account, or indictment, Paul West has written instead a novel, his ninth, that never forgets language and the sensibility it issues from as the real protagonist. The richness of West's prose is the real wealth here, and it is, like Stauffenberg's hours, loaded with all the treasure of a "truant mind." *The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg* is a treasury of cadences, images, and dictions that bespeak the vital quality of the book's character and the mastery of its author.

RONALD CHRIST

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LETTERS

Ideas on Trial

To the Editor:

In her article "Forgetting the Past" (*Partisan Review*, 4, 1981), Erika Apfelbaum has a number of interesting things to say on three topics: (1) "the political meaning and context of the suits against revisionism" (referring specifically to the Paris trials in which Robert Faurisson was convicted), (2) the "growing number of people [who] seem to be touched by, drawn into, or even converted to the revisionist arguments" denying the Holocaust (particularly, "libertarians"), and (3) the "psychosocial" context for this phenomenon. She also refers to my role in the "Faurisson affair." The following remarks are excerpted from a letter commenting on these points.

Consider first point (1). As Apfelbaum observes, Faurisson was suspended from teaching after "classroom disruptions." She does not indicate whether she perceives an issue of academic freedom here, though the question is surely relevant to the "support" for Faurisson that she discusses.

Turning to the trials, Apfelbaum focuses attention on the most significant of these, the trial for falsification of history. She does not cite the verdict of the court but writes that "these judicial decisions seem correct and in accordance with the normal order of things." They are indeed in accordance with the normal order of things—in the USSR, for example. In fact, they amount to little other than a reiteration of the basic content of the Zhdanov doctrine. Faurisson was condemned for failure of "responsibility" and "prudence" as a historian, for failing to deal properly with "all the documents and all the testimony," for treating documents with "a semantic analysis always oriented in the direction of negation," etc. He was not charged with inciting racial hatred, but with "allowing others [!] to use his writings with the intention of apologetics for war crimes or incitement to racial hatred." For these and similar crimes he was condemned to a suspended three-month sentence and to what Apfelbaum describes as "various fines," including the costs of publicizing the judgment in the press, radio, and television, which in his appeal Faurisson estimates (whether rightly or wrongly, I do not know) at several hundred thousand dollars.

Apfelbaum writes that "the trial was not intended to impose censorship, nor was the court

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asked to rule on the question of historical truth. . . . Rather, the question involved the historian's civil responsibility for the social consequences that ensue from ignoring or distorting documents in one's writing." This is a fair rendition of the verdict of the court, which stated that it was not restricting the right of the historian to express himself freely, but merely punishing Faurisson for doing so. Any commissar could say the same.

Apfelbaum states further that although the court did not "rule on the question of historical truth," it did determine "that Faurisson should not be able to invoke the privilege of free speech for lies that he uttered." It is not easy to maintain consistency while trying to defend a verdict such as this.

Apfelbaum raises exactly one objection to the trials. They pose an "insoluble dilemma" in that "one is forced onto the territory of one's opponent," that is, "we are forced to prove the truth of the deaths of our parents." But she argues that despite the dilemma, "it is impossible to remain silent today." The implication is that France affords opponents of Faurisson's views no medium in which they can respond apart from the courts.

Suppose that we accept Apfelbaum's position that all of this is "correct" and "normal." The implications are clear. Consider, for example, American historians who write that the US committed no war crimes in Indochina, distorting and ignoring crucial evidence and arguing that at most a charge of "intellectual error" can be raised against those responsible for the carnage. Or investigators of race and IQ, who have been charged with falsification of evidence and who unquestionably have "allowed others" (how could they prevent it?) to use their work with the intention of inciting to racial hatred; for example, British National Front organizer Martin Webster writes that "the most important factor in the build-up of self-confidence among racists and the collapse of morale amongst multi-racialists was the publication in 1969 by Professor Arthur Jensen in the *Harvard Education Review*." By Apfelbaum's standards, it would be "correct" to punish them for their lack of "civil responsibility."

Turning to Apfelbaum's second point, is it true that "the number of converts increases" and that the revisionist claim "gains an audience," the alleged fact that she is concerned to explain? Is it true that the Rue Copernic bombing reflects growing anti-Semitism in France, as she intimates? Or that Jean-Gabriel Cohn-Bendit and others

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"deny . . . the idea of the genocide itself"? The latter is a serious charge. Cohn-Bendit addresses this question in a letter on the Faurisson affair refused publication in *Le Monde*, which appeared in *Libération* in 1979. He argues that one must defend freedom of expression for "the most ignoble texts," and that the proper way to respect the memory of "the millions of Jewish dead" caused by Nazi "mass murder" (which "did take place") is "to defend without respite the right to freedom." These comments hardly seem compatible with Apfelbaum's allegations. Perhaps she has some evidence for what she claims, but it hardly seems responsible to put forth such charges without supporting documentation—particularly, on the part of someone who quotes with approval the doctrine of the current Minister of Justice that freedom of speech "is closely related to responsibility," and who believes that it is "normal" and "correct" for the state to enforce such "responsibility."

In the same connection, Apfelbaum writes that "the libertarians' support for Faurisson's statements . . . at first glance seems puzzling and unexpected. Thion, like Chomsky, takes a strong stand against the way the Western world disseminates distorted information for propaganda purposes. . . ." Apfelbaum appears to be implying that I am one of the libertarians who "supports Faurisson's statements." She certainly knows that this is false, and in the light of the flood of lies on this matter in France with which she is certainly familiar, it might have been responsible for her to say so instead of leaving (here and elsewhere) an insinuation that she knows to be false. She might, for example, have noted that in the French press and elsewhere I have reiterated, in this connection, my often expressed view that "the massacre of the Jews" was "the most fantastic outburst of collective insanity in human history" and that one degrades oneself by even entering into a debate over the details, a position that Apfelbaum restates in milder terms in her sole objection to the trials.

As for "the growing strength of revisionism" to which Apfelbaum refers, it is a question of fact whether this assessment is accurate, and what the scale of the phenomenon may be. We might ask, for example, how important a figure Faurisson would be in French intellectual life if he had not been suspended from teaching under threat of violence or brought to trial for his writings; as a possibly relevant comparison, we might attempt to assess the impact on

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American society of the writings of Arthur Butz of Northwestern University, noting that there is no "Butz affair."

There are other similar questions. Why, for example, have many US journals recently devoted articles to exposing Faurisson's fallacies and deploring the alleged support for his theses, while ignoring Arthur Butz, who, one might think, would be more important here than an obscure and reviled former professor of French literature at Lyons? Why the constant pretense, noted above, that opponents of the Zhdanov doctrine defend Faurisson's views? Or to take a narrower point, why does Apfelbaum refer without comment to "the book's preface by Noam Chomsky" (the book being Faurisson's *Mémoire en défense*, written in preparation for the falsification of history trial), when she certainly knows that my statement to which she alludes, written in response to lies in France concerning the civil libertarian petition she cites, was appended to a book that I did not know existed, and that my letter requesting that it be separated from this book arrived too late to affect publication a few weeks after my statement was written? Or, why was there no comparable chorus of outrage when I argued, at the height of the Vietnam war, that it would be wrong to bar counterinsurgency research in the universities on grounds of academic freedom, or when I consistently held that people I regard as war criminals should not be denied the right to teach because of their views and actions? There could hardly be a clearer proof of the hypocrisy of the current uproar over my defense of Faurisson's right of free expression, surely a far less controversial stand. Or, one final question, why the silence—or, as in Apfelbaum's case, approbation—concerning the judgment of the French court that the state can legitimately punish a historian for his writings, denying him, in Apfelbaum's approving phrase, the right "to invoke the privilege of free speech for lies that he uttered"—lies about historical fact, as determined by the state tribunal? One might plausibly contend that these questions, and a series of others like them, merit attention no less than the efforts by a tiny group of "revisionist historians," who are regarded with near universal outrage and contempt, to deny the existence of the Nazi massacres.

Noam Chomsky
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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Ms. Apfelbaum replies:

Professor Chomsky's response is focused largely on the global question of freedom of speech (including academic freedom). Sometimes, however, when this issue is brought to center stage and the spotlight of analysis shined upon it, all other moral and political considerations become overshadowed and relegated to the obscurity of the wings; this can result in an imbalanced view of dramatic events. Chomsky questions, for example, whether the commotion surrounding revisionism is mainly the result of Faurisson's academic suspension and trials. In looking at these events solely from a "freedom of speech" perspective, one finds the *content* itself of the revisionist ideas somehow being moved backstage and downplayed. The "efforts of a tiny group of revisionist historians" and their denial of the Holocaust may then seem neither worthy of consideration nor problematic, and no attempt therefore need be made to analyze the harmful consequences of their falsifications, incitations, appropriations by others, etc. But one cannot simply neglect to take these into account—especially when there are the psychosocial effects on people's lives and on their social identities. Neither can one ignore the political and social dynamics which accompanied the rising visibility of the revisionist theses: for many of us who lived these last few years in France, sensitized to events observed within that context—which included both the collapse of certain left-wing ideological beliefs and the rise of the Right—there was indeed a sense both of urgency to understand in depth, and of immediacy to react towards, the revisionist phenomenon in its various manifestations, corollaries, and implications.

While we may agree with Chomsky that revisionism is limited to a "tiny group," we nonetheless should keep in mind the lessons of history about how marginal phenomena and initially small political groupings can become energized by a particular sociopolitical context and have a devastating impact. In fact, I *do* concur with Chomsky's assessment that the phenomenon of "no-Holocaust revisionism" is limited, that Faurisson is just an "obscure" professor, and that those who champion him are indeed only a small minority; but this, by no means, precludes the phenomenon from being significant. It can only appear insignificant—and invite hasty or uncritical comparisons to U.S. revisionists such as Butz—if one ignores the larger realities of the

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particular moment when revisionism surfaced in France.

The recent evolution of the pro-Faurisson libertarians is an especially illuminating example of the wider implications and spreading effects of revisionism: it is a case of appropriation of a revisionism to fit a particular political need. Their taking sides with Faurisson's revisionism (cf. articles by Jean-Gabriel Cohn-Bendit or Claud Karnoouh in *Intolérable intolérance*, 1981) now goes far beyond any simple defense of freedom of speech. For this group, it is indeed the *rejection* of the existence of the gas chambers that has become a crucial element for the soundness and internal consistency of their idiosyncratic politics. The disappearance, or removal by revision, of the gas chambers from the Holocaust's history reduces to a lower common denominator an extermination process unique for its time in the technological perfection and mass systematization of atrocity. For these libertarians, the Holocaust becomes leveled to the more common institution of the concentration camp system, and can now be more directly compared to any other historical episodes where large masses were subjected to forced labor and death in a confinement system—e.g., the Gulag. Ultimately, to make their political point, they have banalized the perversity and horrors of one regime in order to denounce better another—as if there were no room for different categories of atrocities or evil.

But is it really necessary for politically committed individuals either to reduce all atrocities to a common banalized denominator, or to create, *a priori*, a hierarchy of political atrocities and a ranking of historical revisions? Or should we not simply denounce them *all*, in the strongest terms, *whenever* and *wherever* we encounter them?

Erika Apfelbaum
Paris, France

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AN APPEAL FOR SOFIA KALISTRATOVA

Sofia Vasilievna Kalistratova, born September 19, 1907, practiced law for many years as a member of the Moscow Bar. She served as defense counsel for dissidents before she was deprived of the right to participate in "political" trials. Now retired and living in Moscow, she is a member of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group and continues to counsel Soviet citizens on their rights.

In recent years, I have more and more often heard the name Sofia Kalistratova mentioned among those suffering persecution for their human rights activities. Now a third search has been conducted in the apartment of Mrs. Kalistratova.

The reason I have not spoken out in her defense until now is purely psychological: Sofia Kalistratova is so identified with "us" that speaking for her seems almost like speaking for myself. But in the Soviet Union, three searches are no laughing matter.

Mrs. Kalistratova saved more than one life from ruin. And her human sympathy was as important as her professional competence when she met with her clients after they had spent months under investigation, isolated in a prison cell.

I have known Mrs. Kalistratova personally for more than a decade. She has voluntarily assumed an added burden in recent years; she has assisted me in my correspondence with persons asking for legal advice who have despaired of finding justice elsewhere. Old people deprived of pensions or shelter. Prisoners unjustly convicted through judicial error or prejudice or sometimes on the basis of their own confessions extorted by physical beatings or simply by fear. Persons fired from their jobs without due process. And other victims of injustice.

Mrs. Kalistratova brought to this painstaking work compassion, tact and experience. I brought her whole sacks full of letters. Her files on these cases were taken from her together with other documents concerning her lawful public activity.

I call upon members of the legal profession and honest people everywhere to speak out in defense of a remarkable woman who has done and is doing so much for others in the name of justice and goodness.

Andrei Sakharov
Gorky
February 24, 1982

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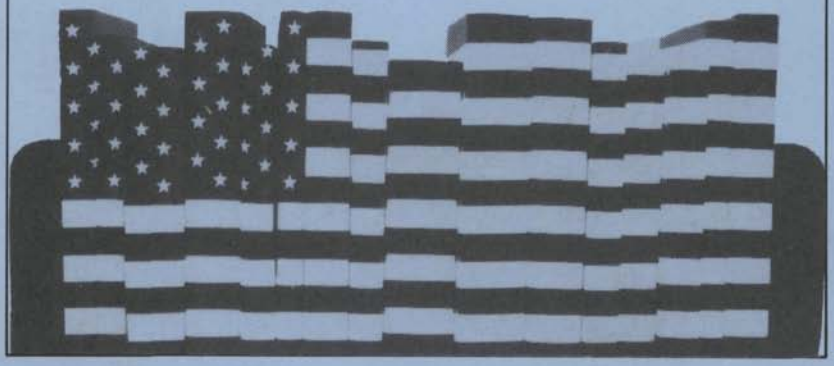

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